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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of States parties due in 2013

Saudi Arabia*

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Introduction

1. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia submitted its combined initial and second periodic reports[1] under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.[2] The combined reports were discussed at the fortieth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women[3] in January 2008 after Saudi Arabia responded to 32 requests for clarifications submitted by the Committee in the context of the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports.[4] The Committee, after discussing these documents, arrived at its concluding comments and recommendations.[5]

2. Accordingly, under article 18, paragraph 1 (b) of the Convention, Saudi Arabia submitted its combined third and fourth reports (the present report). The combined reports cover the key measures and efforts undertaken by Saudi Arabia to give effect to those principles and provisions of the Convention to which Saudi Arabia has committed. They include an analytical description of the results of such measures and efforts, the challenges and obstacles facing women in the exercise of their rights and the measures taken to surmount them during 2008-2015. The combined reports also cover the measures taken to implement the commitments agreed by Saudi Arabia in response to the Committee's concluding comments as well as other information reflecting the progress that has been achieved in women's rights in general. The combined third and fourth reports should be read in the light of the documents mentioned in paragraph 1 above.

3. The present report was prepared by a committee comprising relevant government entities[6] formed within the Human Rights Commission under Royal Order No. 6994 of 16/11/1435 A.H. (11/9/2014). Civil society organizations concerned with human rights or specific human rights issues also helped prepare the report in a process entailing broad national participation.

4. The preparation of the report[7] involved the following stages:

a. Preparation stage: In this stage, the members of the report preparation committee and the participating representatives of civil society organizations were provided with the knowledge and skills needed to prepare contractual reports through training courses and workshops. For this purpose, Saudi Arabia availed itself of the memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation which it concluded with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2012 to hold a training course on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in March 2014 with the participation of trainers certified by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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[1] CEDAW/C/SAU/2.

[2] Hereinafter referred to as "the Convention".

[3] Hereinafter referred to as "the Committee".

[4] CEDAW/C/SAU/Q/2 and CEDAW/C/SAU/Q2/Add.1.

[5] CEDAW/C/SAU/CO/2.

[6] The Ministries of Education, Foreign Affairs, Municipal and Rural Affairs, Interior, Higher Education, Social Affairs, Justice, Culture and Information, Labour, Health, Economy and Planning and Civil Service.

[7] This section addresses aspects of para. 40 of the concluding comments.

b. Information gathering stage: In this stage, the information needed for the report was collected based on the principles of objectivity, transparency and documentation. Meetings were held with representatives of civil society organizations to obtain relevant information and to review available information. The information collection process continued until the report submission date.

c. Drafting stage: During this stage, available information on appropriate topics was identified for inclusion in the report. The committee included general information to clarify the overall situation. It also focused on statistical data, using the appropriate technical terms to facilitate the reading and discussion of the report. This stage resulted in the preparation of a draft report.

d. Review and national consultation stage: In this stage, representatives of government entities and the civil society organizations that participated in the report preparation process were invited to review and discuss the report in assemblies, meetings and workshops and through correspondence. Amendments were made to the draft report to produce the final report document.

5. Royal Order No. 13084 of 27/3/1436 A.H. (18/1/2015) was issued to form a standing committee comprising concerned government agencies to prepare the national reports on human rights conventions to which Saudi Arabia has become a party. The committee has broad powers to prepare reports and ensure that they are submitted at the designated times in an effective manner.

6. The achievements and efforts described by the present report and other reports submitted by Saudi Arabia stem from programmes and policies that have been designed to strengthen and protect human rights, including women's rights. These programmes and policies take into account a number of principles, including prioritization, gradual implementation, inclusiveness, etc. They are based on the laws of Saudi Arabia, international and regional instruments and the observations and recommendations issued by the committees concerned with monitoring the implementation of such instruments. Any convention to which Saudi Arabia becomes a party is published in the Official Gazette (*Umm al-Qura*), which is disseminated to the concerned government agencies. Article 11 (1) of the Procedures for Concluding International Treaties issued under Cabinet Decision No. 287 of 14/8/1431 A.H. (26/7/2010) provides, upon the entry into force of a convention, for the concerned agencies to adopt the measures needed to implement the convention, including the measures needed to fulfil all Saudi commitments arising therefrom. The observations and recommendations issued by the United Nations committees concerned with monitoring the implementation of such conventions are also circulated to the concerned government agencies.[8]

I. General information

a. Population

7. The population of Saudi Arabia, according to the latest estimates published in 2016, totals 32,248,123, including 21,553,696 Saudis. The population growth rate is 2.41 per cent per annum and population density totals 16.1 persons/square

[8] This section addresses aspects of paras. 8, 44 and 45 of the concluding comments.

kilometre. All Saudi citizens are Muslim. Arabic is the official language of the country.

More than 7 million Muslims travel to Saudi Arabia each year to perform the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages. Saudi Arabia is also a destination for non-Saudi labourers drawn by the large development projects being undertaken in Saudi Arabia, the excellent job opportunities and the attractive economic environment.

b. Economic, social and cultural indicators

8. The following table shows key economic, social and cultural indicators for Saudi Arabia:

GDP growth in fixed prices (2010 = 100) in 2015	3.35%
Per capita GDP in 2015 in current prices	77,711 Saudi riyals (US$ 20,723)
General cost of living index (inflation) in 2015	132.9
Change in cost of living index (inflation) in 2015	2.20%
Unemployment rate relative to the total population (age 15 and older) in the second half of 2015	5.60%
Infant mortality rate per 1000 newborns in 2015	15.2
Gross primary school enrolment rate in 2015	107.80%
Net primary school enrolment rate in 2015	97.90%
Economic participation rate for the population age 15 and older in the second half of 2015	54.00%
Employment rate for the population age 15 and older in the second half of 2015	94.40%
Percentage of Saudi labour force relative to the total labour force in the second half of 2015	46.20%
Percentage of Saudi employed persons relative to total employed persons in the second half of 2015	43.30%
Percentage of employed persons relative to the total population in the second half of 2015	36.20%
Percentage of Saudi employed persons relative to the total Saudi population in the second half of 2015	23.40%
Percentage of unemployed persons relative to the total population in the second half of 2015	2.10%
Percentage of unemployed Saudis relative to the total Saudi population in the second half of 2015	3.00%

c. The legal and institutional framework for strengthening and protecting human rights

The Constitution

9. Saudi Arabia applies the Islamic Sharia in all its affairs, as enshrined in the Basic Law of Governance promulgated by Royal Order No. A/90 of 27/08/1412 A.H. (02/03/1992). The Basic Law of Governance covers the form, principles and authorities of the State. Under article 1 of the law, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a fully sovereign Arab Islamic State. Its religion shall be Islam and its constitution shall be the Book of God and the Sunnah (Traditions) of His Messenger, may God's blessings and peace be upon him. Its language shall be Arabic and its capital shall be the city of Riyadh". The law provides for a monarchical system of governance in Saudi Arabia, whereby article 5 (1) of the law states, "The system of governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be monarchical". The King is responsible for supervising the application of the Islamic Sharia, as stated in article 55 of the law: "The King shall administer the affairs of the nation in accordance with the dictates of Islam. He shall supervise the implementation of the Islamic Sharia, the laws and general policies of the State and the protection and defence of the country. Accordingly, under article 6 of the law, "Citizens shall pledge allegiance to the King on the basis of the Book of God and the Sunnah of his Messenger". Article 7 states, "Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives its authority from the Book of God Most High and the Sunnah of his Messenger, both of which govern this Law and all the laws of the State". Governance in Saudi Arabia is based on the principles and values enjoined by the Islamic Sharia, which are justice, consultation and equality, as provided in article 8 of the aforesaid law: "Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, shura (consultation), and equality in accordance with the Islamic Sharia".

Laws

10. Saudi laws explicitly provide for the strengthening and protection of human rights. Chief among such laws are the Basic Law of Governance, Law of the Judiciary, Law of the Board of Grievances, Law of Criminal Procedures and other laws relating to the justice system. Other laws and regulations concerning labour, health, education and social insurance contain detailed provisions on human rights derived from the principles appearing in the Basic Law of Governance. Following is a presentation of the principles and provisions of the Basic Law of Governance as well as key laws, regulations and decrees that protect human rights directly and represent the regulatory framework for human rights.

- **Basic Law of Governance**

11. The Basic Law of Governance includes basic principles and provisions intended to strengthen and protect human rights. Under article 26 of the law, "The State shall protect human rights in accordance with the Islamic Sharia". The law provides for an ensemble of basic rights, including the right to justice and equality, whereby article 8 states, "Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, shura (consultation), and equality in accordance with the Islamic Sharia". Regarding equality before the law, article 47 states, "The right of litigation shall be guaranteed equally for citizens and residents in the Kingdom ..." The right to security

is the cornerstone of all human rights, as provided definitively in article 36, which states, "The State shall provide security to all its citizens and residents in its territory. A person's actions may not be restricted, nor may a person be detained or imprisoned, except under the provisions of the Law". Regarding private property and personal freedom, article 18 states, "The State shall guarantee the freedom and inviolability of private property ownership. Property may be seized only in the public interest, provided the owner is fairly compensated". Under article 37, "Residences shall be inviolable, and they may not be entered or searched without their owner's permission except in the cases set forth in the Law". Article 40 states, "Correspondence by telegraph and mail, telephone conversations, and other means of communication shall be protected and may not be seized, delayed, viewed, or listened to except in the cases set forth in the Law". Regarding social security and social insurance, article 27 states, "The State shall guarantee the right of the citizen and his family in the event of emergencies, sickness, disability and old age and shall support the social security system and encourage institutions and individuals to participate in charitable work".

12. The Basic Law of Governance also provides for the right to work. Article 28 states, "The State shall facilitate employment for every able person and shall enact laws that protect the rights of the worker and employer". Regarding education, article 13 of the law states, "The State shall provide public education and shall be committed to combating illiteracy". On the right to health, article 31 of the law states, "The State shall be concerned with public health and shall provide health care to every citizen". On participation in cultural life, article 29 of the law states, "The State shall foster sciences, arts and culture and shall encourage scientific research, protect Islamic and Arabic heritage and contribute to Arab, Islamic and human civilization". Article 39 of the law affirms freedom of opinion and expression based on the Islamic Sharia, which prohibits the harming of people and their dignity, stating, "The mass media, publishing media and all means of expression shall use decent language and adhere to the laws of the State. They shall contribute towards educating the nation and supporting its unity. Anything that is conducive to sedition and division, or undermines the security of the State or its public relations or harms the honour and rights of man shall be prohibited. Laws shall set forth provisions to achieve this". On the right to a healthy environment, article 32 states, "The State shall endeavour to preserve, protect and improve the environment and prevent environmental pollution".

- **Shura Council Law**

13. The Shura Council Law was promulgated by Royal Decree No. A/91 of 27/8/1412 A.H. (1/3/1992). This law contains detailed provisions that give effect to a key principle on which governance in Saudi Arabia is based, namely consultation. The law also represents the most important framework for guaranteeing the right to political participation. Article 15 of the Shura Council Law states, "The Shura Council shall express its opinion on the general policies of the State that are referred to it by the Prime Minister. It may in particular:

> "a. Discuss and provide its view on the general economic and social development plan.

"b. Study laws, regulations, international treaties and conventions and concessions and make recommendations thereon as it deems appropriate.

"c. Interpret laws.

"d. Discuss annual reports submitted by the ministries and other government agencies and make recommendations thereon as it deems appropriate."

- **Law on Associations and Foundations**

14. The Law on Associations and Foundations was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/8 of 19/2/1437 A.H. (1/12/2015). The law regulates, develops and protects non-governmental activity and contributes to national development and the strengthening of citizen participation in the directing and development of society. It also promotes a culture of volunteer activity and social solidarity among members of society. It empowers the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to license and develop associations and foundations, provide government assistance to associations and disseminate a culture of volunteer work in society. Article 25 of the law grants public-benefit status to associations that seek to achieve the public interest, including human rights. Article 26 (1) prohibits attachment of or execution on the funds of public-benefit associations without a judicial order. Article 8 provides for the submission of an application to establish an association comprising at least 10 Saudi persons who are natural persons or legal entities, and it requires the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to respond to the application within 60 days of the completion of the application papers.

- **Child Protection Law**

15. The Child Protection Law was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/4 of 03/02/1436 A.H. (26/11/2014). The law aims to protect children age 18 and below from abuse and neglect. It defines child abuse or neglect to include causing the interruption of a child's education, child abuse, harassment or exploitation of a child, use of indecent language that degrades a child's dignity and discrimination against a child for any ethnic, social or economic reason. The law bans the production, publication, presentation, circulation and possession of any work that is directed at children and addresses or arouses the child's natural impulses by favourably depicting behaviour that violates the Islamic Sharia, public order or public morals.

- **Unemployment Insurance Law**

16. The Unemployment Insurance Law was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/18 of 12/3/1435 A.H. (14/1/2014). This law guarantees the provision of compensation to unemployed persons until they are able to resume working according to specific rules without any gender discrimination.

- **Law of Protection from Abuse**

17. The Law on Protection from Abuse was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/52 of 15/11/1434 A.H. (20/09/2013). It is a key part of the national framework for combating various forms of abuse that may be encountered by groups in society. The law is intended to: guarantee protection from abuse of

various types; provide assistance and treatment; provide shelter and social, psychological and health care; provide for the adoption of the necessary legal measures to hold accountable and punish perpetrators of abuse; and spread awareness in society of the concept and effects of abuse.

- **Regulations concerning Domestic Workers and the Like**

18. The regulations were issued under Cabinet Decision No. 310 of 07/09/1434 A.H. (15/07/2013). They are intended to regulate the relationship between employers and domestic workers by stating the rights and obligations of the parties to the relationship. Under the regulations, an employer may not assign a domestic worker to perform work that is not agreed in the contract or that endangers the worker's health or harms his/her dignity; nor may the worker be assigned to work for a third party. The regulations require the employer to: pay the worker the agreed wage at the end of each month without delay, with written documentation of the worker's receipt of the monthly wage; provide appropriate housing for the domestic worker; provide a daily rest and weekly break for the worker as agreed by the two parties; provide paid sick leave in the event of an illness; provide paid leave of one month after the worker completes two years of service with the employer; and provide severance pay to the worker after the contract ends if the worker has completed four years of service with the employer. The regulations require a domestic worker to respect the teachings of the Islamic religion, Saudi laws and the culture of Saudi society. They also include penalties applicable to employers or domestic workers who violate the provisions of the regulations.

- **Execution Law**

19. The Execution Law was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/53 of 13/8/1433 A.H. (3/7/2012). It provides for the monitoring of the execution of judicial judgments in personal status and monetary cases whose execution may be delayed. The law assigns the judicial authority to execute judgments in monetary and family cases. The execution judge is authorized to conduct compulsory execution, supervise compulsory execution procedures, decide in execution disputes regardless of the value thereof and issue decisions and orders concerning execution. He may seek the assistance of the competent agencies. The law also assigns the execution judge to execute foreign judgments, decisions and documented entries.

- **Anti-Trafficking in Persons Offences Law**

20. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Offences Law was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/40 of 21/07/1430 A.H. (14/07/2009). The law is in line with international and regional anti-trafficking in persons standards. It prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons described in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol) to which Saudi Arabia is a party. The law adds other forms of trafficking not included in the protocol, namely the conduct of medical experiments and mendicancy. The law defines different types of trafficking-in-persons offences and the penalties thereof, which may be up to 15 years of imprisonment and/or a fine of up to 1 million riyals (US$266,000). The law strengthens penalties in cases where the

victim is a woman or child, and it deems irrelevant the consent of victims in any of the offences mentioned in the law.

- **Law of Printed Materials and Publication**

21. The law was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/32 of 03/09/1421 A.H. (29/11/2000). It protects freedom of opinion and expression. At the same time, it strengthens the legal restriction of freedom of expression consistent with relevant international standards to protect the rights of others from infringement. This law was amended recently to strengthen its provisions and achieve its objective.

- **Disability Law**

22. The Disability Law was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/37 of 23/9/1421 A.H. (19/12/2000). It protects and strengthens the rights of persons with disabilities, defines a person with disabilities and covers not only treatment but also prevention, whereby article 2 of the law states, "The State shall guarantee the right of a disabled person to care, prevention and rehabilitation services. The State shall encourage institutions and individuals to participate in charitable works concerning persons with disabilities". This law is in line with relevant international standards.

Royal Orders and cabinet decisions

23. Many royal orders and cabinet decisions have been issued to buttress the legal framework for strengthening and protecting human rights, particular the following:

- Royal Order No. A/20 of 7/2/1436 A.H. (29/11/2014), which provides for the formation of a committee of specialists to prepare a draft "Code of Judicial Procedures" concerning legal topics of relevance to the judiciary. The topics are classified in the same way as subject matter is classified in chapters in works on Islamic jurisprudence.

- Cabinet Decision No. 406 of 27/12/1433 A.H. (12/11/2012) concerning special arrangements for the children of Saudi women married to foreigners. The decision: approves the transfer of the employment services of the children of a Saudi woman married to a foreign man to their mother if the children reside in Saudi Arabia; entitles such a mother to bring her children to Saudi Arabia if they are abroad, in which case the State is obliged to bear the residency fees for the children; permits the children to work in the private sector without the transfer of their services; and treats the children on a par with Saudis in respect of entitlement to education and medical treatment. The decision allows such children to be taken into account in the calculation of the rate of Saudization of jobs in the private sector. It permits a Saudi woman married to a foreign man to bring her husband to Saudi Arabia from abroad or transfer his employment services to Saudi Arabia if he is resident in Saudi Arabia and so wishes. It also permits the husband to work in the private sector provided he has a recognized passport.

- Cabinet Decision No. 192 of 03/6/1431 A.H. (17/5/2010). The decision approves rules on the status of Saudi children abroad who have a Saudi father and a non-Saudi mother. It seeks to address the situation of Saudi children abroad who are neglected and indigent because their father disavows them or

is estranged from them. It requires the father to rectify the situations of such children according to the instructions issue for this purpose if the father acknowledges the children. If the father is unable to provide for the children's expenses, the children are referred to the Charitable Society for the Care of Saudi Families Abroad or a similar association. The association allocates a monthly sum to such families. If a father disavows or is alienated from his children, the mother must submit documents proving that she married the husband and that the marriage produced the children whom the father disavows. The documents must be submitted to the concerned entity in her country or the Saudi representation in that country with a request to rectify the situation of the children. Upon receipt of the report that the father or his proxy disavows paternity, the mother is notified. If the mother insists that he is the father of the children, she may bring a judicial action to prove his paternity. Upon the proving of paternity, the father or his proxy must execute any judgment issued against the father and must rectify the conditions of the children legally by depositing maintenance for the children according to foreign execution judgments. If the father disavows children proven to be related to him, the decision requires the father to rectify their conditions and pay maintenance. If he is unable to pay maintenance, the family registers with the Charitable Association for the Care of Saudi Families Abroad or a similar association, which then assumes responsibility for the family's expenses pursuant to the law governing the association.

- Royal Order No. 8382 of 28/10/1429 A.H. (28/10/2008) approving recommendations concerning women's rights, particularly:
    - Benefit from the experiences of other countries concerning family courts.
    - Creation of women's divisions in the courts and notary offices under the supervision of an independent women's department in the main agency.
    - Application of procedures that ensure the treatment of any procrastination that infringes on the rights of women, efforts to prevent violence against women who bring legal actions and the imposition of penalties if violations are proven.
    - The handling of complaints submitted by women; and the creation of a coherent, clear method for receiving, investigating and addressing complaints.
- Cabinet Decision No. 120 of 12/5/1425 A.H. (30/6/2004), which provides for:
    - Government agencies that license engagement in economic activity to receive the applications of women to obtain the necessary licenses to engage in economic activities.
    - Commencement of the establishment of women's units and divisions in all agencies that provide services relevant to women.
    - Allocation and preparation by the relevant agencies of land or areas within cities and for the construction of industrial enterprises that employee women.

- Formation by the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry of a women's committee comprising persons with expertise and competence.

• Cabinet Decision No. 166 of 12/7/1421 A.H. (09/10/2000) on rules regulating the relationship between employers and foreign workers. The decision includes the following provisions:

- The work contract concluded between an employer and foreign worker must regulate the contractual relationship between the two parties.
- An employer may not retain the passport of a foreign worker or the passports of his family members.
- A foreign worker may move freely within Saudi Arabia provided he has a current residency permit.
- A foreign worker is responsible for referring to government and other agencies to obtain services that allow him and his family to live decently — e.g., the issuance of a driver's license, purchase of a vehicle, obtainment of a telephone, etc. — without being required to obtain his employer's approval.
- Replacement of the term "sponsor" wherever it occurs with the term "employer".

Key amendments to human rights laws

• **Law of the Judiciary and Law of the Board of Grievances**

24. A key result of the Project to Develop the Judiciary initiated under Royal Order No. A/14 of 23/2/1426 A.H. (3/4/2005) is the promulgation of two new laws, the Law of the Judiciary and the Law of the Board of Grievances, by Royal Decree No. M/78 of 19/9/1428 (1/10/2007). The law of the Judiciary provides for the formation of courts of first instance, including general courts, criminal courts, personal status courts, commercial courts and Labour courts. It also provides for the establishment of courts of appeal which have subordinate chambers, including the human rights chamber, criminal chamber, personal status chamber, commercial chamber and labour chamber. The law stipulates the formation of a Supreme Court and assigns it to oversee the soundness of the application of the provisions of the Sharia law and laws that fall under the jurisdiction of the general judiciary. The Supreme Court general panel is responsible for establishing judicial principles according to the Law of the Judiciary.

25. The Law of the Board of Grievances (Administrative Judiciary) includes a declaration forming the board and an administrative judicial council. It divides the courts of the Board of Grievances into administrative courts, an administrative court of appeal and a supreme administrative court. The law specifies the jurisdiction of each of these courts. It contains provisions on the appointment of judges to the board and provisions on employee affairs. As a result of the promulgation of the Law of the Board of Grievances, the Law of Procedure before the Sharia Courts and Law of Procedures before the Board of Grievances have been amended accordingly.

- **Law of Criminal Procedure**

26. A new Law of Criminal Procedure has been promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/2 of 22/1/1435 A.H. (26/11/2013). Key amendments to the old law include the definition of the rights of the accused (article 4) and specification of the cases in which a member of the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution must recuse himself from a case or decision; such cases include offences committed against him personally, cases in which he is the spouse of a litigant and other cases in which such member's independence or integrity could be adversely affected (article 21). The amendments also strengthen the principal that the accused is innocent until proven guilty, whereby article 34 of the new law requires a criminal investigation officer to immediately hear the statements of the accused person who has been arrested; if there is sufficient evidence to charge the accused, the accused must be referred within 24 hours, with a procès-verbal, to the investigator, who must question the accused within 24 hours and then order the arrest or release of the accused. The amendments explicitly stipulate of the right of the accused to seek the assistance of a defender in the investigation and trial stages. If the accused is unable to do so, he may ask the court to appoint an attorney to defend him at the expense of the State. The law and its implementing regulation state the particulars of this provision (articles 4, 65 and 139). The amended law empowers a judge to suspend the enforcement of a punitive prison term concerning a general right if the judge believes that the character of the convicted person so warrants. It also includes amendments to harmonize with the amendments made to the Law of the Judiciary.

- **Labour Law**

27. Royal Decree No. M/46 of 5/6/1436 A.H. (25/3/2015) approves the amendment of provisions in the Labour Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/51 of 23/8/1426 A.H. (27/9/2005). Among these amendments are the following: If an employer assigns any natural person or legal entity to perform any or a portion of the employer's primary activities, the assignee must provide his labourers with all rights and benefits that are provided by the original employer to his labourers (article 11); an employer must post the Labour Regulations and any amendments thereto in a conspicuous place in his establishment or use any other means of bringing such regulations to the attention of the persons covered by the regulations (article 13); a worker may not be transferred without the worker's written consent from his original place of employment to another place of employment requiring a change in the worker's place of residence (article 53); a worker may not work for more than five consecutive hours without a period for rest, prayer and meals of at least one-half hour once during work hours, and a worker may not remain in his/her place of employment for more than 12 hours in a single day (article 101).

- **Human rights treaties to which Saudi Arabia is a party**

28. Saudi Arabia has become a party to a number of international and regional human rights treaties based on its Islamic and international status as a founding member of a number of international and regional organizations, including the United Nations, and based on its recognition of the importance of international and regional solidarity to strengthen and protect human rights, all of which reflects

positively on its domestic human rights situation. Saudi Arabia has ratified or acceded to the following rights treaties under the Royal Decrees mentioned below:

1. Convention on the Rights of the Child, under Royal Decree No. M/7 of 16/04/1416 A.H. (09/12/1995).
2. Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Punishment, under Royal Decree M/11 of 04/04/1418 A.H. (08/08/1997).
3. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, under Royal Decree No. M/12 of 04/16/1418 A.H. (20/08/1997).
4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, under Royal Decree M/25 of 28/05/1421 A.H. (28/08/2000).
5. Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam, under Royal Decree M/54 of 27/8/1427 A.H. (20/09/2006).
6. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention on Combating Transnational Organized Crime (2000), under Royal Decree No. M/56 of 11/06/1428 A.H. (26/06/2007).
7. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Protocol under the Royal M/28 of 05/22/1429 A.H. (27/05/2008).
8. Arab Charter on Human Rights, under Royal Decree No. M/19 of 27/03/1430 A.H. (03/24/2009).
9. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, under Royal Decree No. M/38 of 18/07/1431 A.H. (06/30/2010).
10. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, Royal Decree M/39 of 18/7/1431 A.H. (30/06/2010).

Saudi Arabia is also party to the following six International Labour Organisation conventions:

1. Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), ratified by Royal Decree No. M/15 of 12/03/1398 A.H. (20/02/1978).
2. Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), ratified by Royal Decree No. M/15 of 03/12/1398 A.H. (02/20/1978).
3. Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), ratified by Royal Decree No. M/15 of 12/03/1398 A.H. (02/20/1978).
4. Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), ratified by Royal Decree No. M/15 of 03/12/1398 A.H. (20/02/1978).
5. Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), ratified by Royal Decree No. M/3 of 22/01/1422 A.H. (16/04/2001).

6. Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), ratified by Royal Decree No. M/37 of 06/18/1434 A.H. (04/28/2013).

Institutions

29. Many government and non-governmental institutions concerned with strengthening and protecting human rights or specific human rights have been established alongside the government agencies that are primarily responsible — each in its own purview — for giving effect to human rights under the Basic Law of Governance and laws emanating therefrom. These institutions include:

- **Human Rights Commission**[9]

30. The Human Rights Commission was established by Cabinet Decision No. 207 of 8/8/1426 (12/09/2005). It is a governmental agency that is directly subordinate to the King. It is concerned with protecting and strengthening human rights based on international standards and the Islamic Sharia. Its statute grants it broad authorities to perform its functions independently and freely. The statute has been amended under a cabinet decision to further strengthen the commission's independence by subordinating it directly to the King after it had been under the executive branch. The commission is authorized to:

  - Ascertain that the concerned government agencies enforce human rights laws and regulations; and to detect human rights violations.
  - Express an opinion on draft human rights laws.
  - Monitor government agencies' implementation, each within its purview, of international human rights instruments to which Saudi Arabia has acceded; and ascertain whether those agencies have adopted the measures needed to implement such instruments.
  - Visit prisons and detention facilities without having to obtain permission to do so from the concerned agency; and submit reports on such visits to the Prime Minister.
  - Receive, investigate, and take legal actions regarding human rights complaints.
  - Formulate a general policy for developing human rights awareness.

31. The commission submitted its first report on the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia. The report includes the commission's observations on the implementation by government agencies, each within its purview, of Saudi commitments in accordance with international human rights standards. The report also covers human rights complaints, particularly concerning: prisoners and detainees; the right to resort to the judiciary and equality before the judiciary; the right to protection from abuse and torture; assurance of physical safety; the right to reputation and dignity; the right to freedom of movement; nationality and residency issues; other basic rights; the right to employment, social care and health care; protection from domestic violence; other economic, social and cultural rights; and the rights of special groups, including women and children, persons with disabilities and the elderly. The report makes 75 recommendations. A government committee

[9] This information addresses aspects of para. 20 of the concluding comments.

has studied recommendations and has formulated appropriate mechanisms for implementing them.

32. Since being established, the commission has formed women's divisions in its main headquarters and branches located throughout Saudi Arabia. Many qualified women work in these divisions. They enjoy equal rights with their male colleagues. Recently, the commission's statute was amended to strengthen its role and enable it to effectively achieve the objectives for which it was established.

- **National Society for Human Rights**

33. The National Society for Human Rights is a non-governmental organization with no connection to any government agency. It enjoys full independence in all its affairs. It is concerned with strengthening, protecting and defending the human rights of citizens, residents and visitors. It interacts with government agencies, non-governmental organizations and international organizations to achieve the objectives set forth in its charter. The society's members include male and female academicians and specialists in areas relating to human rights. The society issues reports on the situation of human rights in Saudi Arabia. Its primary functions include:

  - Ascertaining the enforcement of the Basic Law of Governance and Saudi domestic laws relating to human rights.
  - Ascertaining the fulfilment by Saudi Arabia of its commitments concerning human rights issues in accordance with international and regional human rights standards.
  - Receiving and following up complaints from competent agencies; and verifying alleged violations and infringements of human rights.

- **The Standing Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons**

34. The Committee was formed under Cabinet Decision No. 244 of 20/07/1430 A.H. (13/07/2009). It is chaired by the chairman of the Human Rights Commission. Its members include representatives of the ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Social Affairs, Labour, Culture and Information as well as the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution. This committee is a key national mechanism for enforcing the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Offences Law. Its functions include:

  - Monitoring the conditions of victims to ensure that they are not harmed again.
  - Developing a policy that presses for the active search for victims and trains law enforcement in ways for identifying victims.
  - Coordinating with the competent authorities to return victims to the countries of their nationality or place of residence in any other state when necessary.
  - Recommending that a victim remain in Saudi Arabia and that the victim's legal status be adjusted accordingly to enable the victim to work if necessary.

- **National Family Safety Programme**

35. The programme was established by Royal Order No. 11471/MB of 16/10/1426 A.H. (18/11/2005). It is a national non-governmental programme that seeks to

protect against domestic violence by monitoring and studying cases of abuse and reporting them to the competent authorities. The programme raises awareness of the harm caused by violence. Its machinery includes a national register of child abuse and neglect cases in Saudi Arabia. The register is kept in the health sector. It is electronic, centralized and advanced. Demographic, personal and treatment data and referrals by the child protection centres are entered into the register directly through the Internet when child abuse and neglect are observed. The register is updated continuously to produce annual statistics for use in preparing an integrated vision for child protection strategists in Saudi Arabia. A key mechanism implemented under the umbrella of the programme is a child support telephone hotline (116111). The hotline provides support for children below the age of 18 who experience abuse, neglect or problems that may affect their growth and development. The line provides free counselling services to children and their care providers and transfers cases requiring intervention to the concerned child welfare authorities.

- **National Commission for Childhood**

36. The commission was formed under Cabinet Decision No. 238 of 14/09/1426 A.H. (17/10/2005). It is a governmental agency concerned with proposing and monitoring the implementation of general policies and strategic plans for the State concerning child care and protection. It develops programmes and projects concerning child care in coordination with the relevant government agencies. It supports and coordinates efforts undertaken by government agencies concerned with the child, recommending what each agency can do within its purview. It helps agencies plan programmes and activities to strengthen child care and spread educational and social awareness of children's rights to ensure their needs are met according to their developmental stage. The commission also develops and monitors the enforcement of rules regulating the protection of children from abuse.

- **Commission to Generate Jobs and Combat Unemployment**

37. The commission was established under a cabinet decision on 12 October 2015. It is subordinate to the chairman of the Economic and Development Affairs Council. It is responsible for creating jobs and combating unemployment in Saudi Arabia by coordinating and strengthening cooperation among government and private agencies concerned with the labour market and by working to develop job creating sectors.

- **King Abdul Aziz Centre for National Dialogue**

38. The centre was established under Royal Order No. 339/M of 24/5/1424 A.H. (24/07/2003). It seeks to address national issues, particularly human rights issues, through constructive dialogue involving the participation of members of all segments of society. Its objectives include creating an appropriate environment for exercising the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The centre has held national meetings in various regions of the Kingdom. These meetings have treated important topics, including the rights and duties of women, the status of education and ways of developing education, work and employment, and human rights.

- **Consultative Council committee concerned with human rights and supervisory bodies**

39. This committee is subordinate to the Consultative Council. It serves as the technical machinery concerned with human rights in the legislative branch. It studies topics relating to: human rights; the combating of corruption; supervisory bodies; laws and regulations relating to human rights and supervisory bodies; international, bilateral and regional treaties on human rights and supervisory bodies; and the combating of corruption. The committee includes male and female members of the Consultative Council. Seventy per cent of its members are women.

- **Saudi Bar Association**

40. The statute of the Saudi Bar Association was promulgated by Cabinet Decision No. 317 of 8/17/1436 A.H. (27/4/2015). The statute strengthens the role of lawyers in consolidating and protecting human rights. Article 2 (7) of the statute provides for the association's provision of legal assistance to entitled persons as well as technical consultation in its members' areas of expertise.

- **Educational Evaluation Commission**

41. The General Educational Evaluation Commission was established under Cabinet Decision No. 120 of 22/4/1434 A.H. (23/2/2014). The commission is an independent legal entity that has administrative and financial independence. It employs many women in leadership posts and is organizationally subordinate to the Prime Minister. The primary purpose of the commission is to evaluate education (public and private), including boys' schools and girls' schools, with a view toward enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education and supporting development and the national economy by improving educational outputs.

d. Equality, non-discrimination and remedies

42. Saudi Arabia derives all its laws from the Islamic Sharia, which enjoins justice and equality and forbids oppression and discrimination of all forms. Accordingly, the Saudi government has made justice and equality the foundation for governance, as stipulated in article 8 of the Basic Law of Governance. Consequently, all laws of the Kingdom relating to human rights are based on the principle of equality, by which justice is achieved, and the prohibition of all forms of unfair discrimination, including discrimination against women. Moreover, all State agencies must treat people without discrimination in respect of religion, ethnicity, sex or nationality. The following mechanisms provide effective guarantees of human rights according to legal procedures if any right is violated by any entity or person:

- The judicial authorities.
- The relevant government departments and committees.
- Government and non-governmental human rights organizations.

43. The courts of the King and Crown Prince are counted among the legally established mechanisms providing remedies established by law, whereby article 43 of the Basic Law of Governance states, "The court of the King and of the Crown Prince shall be accessible to every citizen and to any person who has a complaint or

a grievance. Every individual shall have the right to address the public authorities in matters of concern to him". The regional emirs (administrative rulers) also play an effective role in strengthening and protecting human rights and suppressing violations. The Law of Regions promulgated by Royal Order No. A/92 of 27/8/1412 A.H. (02/03/1992), article 7 (c) states that the regional emirs must guarantee the rights and freedoms of individuals and refrain from any action that would infringe such rights and freedoms except within the limits provided by the Sharia and the law.

e. The Tenth Development Plan, 2015-2019

44. Development planning has been practiced in Saudi Arabia since 1970. Nine five-year development plans have been implemented. The plans have brought about the achievement of key economic, social and cultural development objectives. They have also helped strengthen the national economy and diversify income sources following many decades of the oil sector's dominance, which has benefited citizens and residents of the Kingdom. In continuation of this path, the cabinet approved, in 2014, 24 general objectives for the Tenth Development Plan 2015-2019. The key objectives — which our people focused — written:

- Boosting of the productivity of the national economy.
- Development of the small and medium enterprises sector and the boosting of its contribution to GDP and the Saudization of the labour force.
- An increase in the private sector's contribution to development and the boosting of its productivity to achieve development objectives.
- Optimal investment in population resources, enhancement of the standard of living and improvement of the quality of life for all segments of society.
- Development of human resources, boosting of the productivity of human resources, and expansion of opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills and expertise.
- Development of the entrepreneurial, knowledge and physical capacities of youth, and the boosting of their abilities to contribute effectively to development.
- Empowerment of women and the boosting of their contribution to the various areas of development.

f. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030

45. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 was approved by Cabinet Decision No. 308 of 18/7/1430 A.H. (25/4/2016). The vision includes development plans and programmes covering broad economic and social sectors. The vision seeks to transform the Kingdom into a successful, pioneering world-class model at all levels. Key means and mechanisms for achieving the vision include the launching of several programmes, such as the Government Restructuring Programme, Visions and Orientations Programme, Law Review Programme, Performance Measurement Programme and National Transformation Programme. The vision is linked closely with human rights. It explicitly provides for the right to security, right to health, right to an education and training, right to work, protection of the family,

empowerment of women, strengthening of participation in political and public life, freedom to form and support associations and the right to participate in cultural, athletic and recreational activities.

46. In order to build the necessary capacities and resources to achieve the ambitious goals of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, Cabinet Decision No. 362 of 1/9/1430 7 A.H. (7/6/2016) was issued to approve the National Transformation Programme 2020. The programme will be implemented in its first year in 24 government agencies operating in the economic and development sectors. It includes strategic objectives linked to interim targets covering up to 2020. The first stage of initiatives will be launched in 2016, to be followed each year by other stages covering other agencies. The programme uses innovative means to identify challenges and seize opportunities. It uses effective tools for planning, the promotion of private-sector participation, implementation and performance evaluation. Its interim targets for achieving several strategic objectives have been developed so as to build an effective base for sustainable government activity based on innovative methods for planning, implementation and national follow-up.

II. Information on the fulfilment of the commitments made by Saudi Arabia in respect of the provisions of the Convention and the concluding comments of the Committee

Part One (arts. 1-6)

Articles 1 and 2 and paragraphs 13, 14, 21 and 22 of the concluding comments

47. Saudi laws are derived from the Islamic Sharia. They incorporate the principle of complete equality between men and women, taking into account the features and characteristics which endow and differentiate between the two sexes. Saudi laws ultimately achieve justice. The Kingdom believes that complementarity in the relationship between the two sexes is the best way to strengthen and protect human rights, including women's rights, and to eliminate discrimination against women. The definition of "discrimination against women" appearing in article 1 of the Convention corresponds with the definition in effect in Saudi Arabia. The laws of Saudi Arabia contain no distinction, exclusion or restriction that would attenuate or frustrate the recognition of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields.

48. The principle of equality, which is basically the opposite of discrimination, including discrimination against women, is covered in article 8 of the Basic Law of Governance, which states, "Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, shura (consultation), and equality in accordance with the Islamic Sharia". This principle is also implied in article 26 of the aforesaid law, which states, "The State shall protect human rights in accordance with the Islamic Sharia". Other principles and provisions included in the Basic Law of Governance and Saudi laws emanating from it, to which reference is made in Part Two of the present report, are consistent with article 1 of the Convention. The aforesaid provisions criminalize discrimination and violence against women. They promote the establishment or support the establishment of institutions intended to strengthen and protect human rights, including women's rights. These institutions include the

Human Rights Commission, National Society for Human Rights and other institutions mentioned in chapter I of the present report as well as government agencies. The Human Rights Commission conducts periodic and ongoing reviews of existing laws and proposes amendments thereto according to article 5 (2) of its statute.

49. Regarding the principle of legal protection for women from any discriminatory act, on a par with men, article 47 of the Basic Law of Governance states, "The right of litigation shall be guaranteed equally for both citizens and residents in the Kingdom." In addition, article 43 of the aforesaid law states, "The court of the King and of the Crown Prince shall be accessible to every citizen and to any person who has a complaint or a grievance. All individuals shall have the right to address the public authorities in matters of concern to them". Moreover, government departments, the Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations, including the National Society for Human Rights, demand justice for women when they face any form of discrimination.

50. Numerous legislative and non-legislative measures have been taken to empower women and strengthen protection of women's rights, particularly the following:

- The promulgation of laws that further strengthen the legal framework for consolidating and protecting human rights, particularly the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Offences Law, Execution Law and Law of Protection From Abuse[10] and its implementing regulation, promulgated by Decision No. 43047 of the Ministry of Social Affairs (8/5/1435 A.H. corresponding to 9/3/2014), which covers mechanisms for enforcing the law, the role of the agencies concerned with enforcing provisions on protection from abuse and the penalties established in this regard.
- Royal Order No. A/44 of 29/2/1434 A.H. (12/01/2013) amending article 3 of the Shura Council Law. The order provides for women to serve as full members of the Shura Council and to hold a minimum of 20 per cent of the seats on the Council, whereas previously women participated in its proceedings only as advisors. Royal Order No. A/45 of 29/2/1434 A.H. (12/1/2013) was also issued to appoint members to the Shura Council in its sixth session (15/1/2013-2/12/2016). Thirty women were appointed to serve as members of the Shura Council.
- Royal Order No. A/121 of 2/7/1432 A.H. (4/6/2011). This order covers programmes, procedures and directives designed to open up employment opportunities for Saudi women in the industrial, economic and services sectors and provide the necessary support for the employment of women and for boosting their participation in economic activity in the labour force to support the implementation of decisions issued in this regard.
- Law of Municipal Councils promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/61 of 4/10/1435 A.H. (1/8/2014), which entitles women to vote and to be elected to municipal councils on a par with men.

[10] These laws are mentioned in chapter I of the present report.

- Royal Decree No. M/28 of 21/5/1434 A.H. (2/4/2013) amending article 67 of the Personal Status Law to make it compulsory for women to obtain a national identity card, whereas previously it was optional. This amendment follows the issuance of a cabinet decision on 25/03/2013 requiring Saudi women to obtain a national identity card within seven years, after which the national identity card is to be the sole means of proving a woman's identity. This measure strengthens the legal competency and empowerment of women.

- Cabinet Decision No. 60 of 28/2/1430 A.H. (17/10/2009), which includes provisions supporting women, such as the expansion of technical and vocational education for girls in a number of specialities, expansion of online employment programmes to facilitate procedures for employing women, expansion of health education programmes for women and the expedited establishment of women's divisions in government agencies that provide services to women.

- Royal Order No. 8382/MB of 28/10/1429 A.H. (28/10/2008) approving the recommendations of the committee formed to study impediments to women's access to the judiciary. These recommendations include creating women's divisions in the courts and notary offices, providing women with a copy of all financial documents pertaining to them to enable them to protect their financial and other rights, applying procedures that address procrastination that infringes the rights of women, measures to prevent violence against women who bring legal actions, adoption of appropriate penalties if such violence is proven, promotion of the role of the execution authority in monitoring the execution of judicial judgments, suppression of negligence and procrastination or attempts to obstruct judgments concerning women, the handling of complaints received from women, and the creation of a coherent, clear method for receiving, investigating and addressing such complaints.

- An increase in the number of protection committees subordinate to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development from 13 to 17.

- Minister of Labour Decision No. 2370/1 of 18/19/1431 A.H. (28/8/2010) stipulating the "prohibition of wage discrimination between male and female workers for work of equal value".

51. Regarding efforts to eliminate violence against women, which is considered a form of discrimination against women, a national strategy to combat domestic violence is currently being developed. The enactment of the Law of Protection from Abuse, its implementing regulation and related executive measures serves to further combat violence of all forms against women. The law includes, in addition to what is mentioned in chapter I above, provisions that address behaviours indicative of an environment conducive to abuse. The law requires any person who observes abuse to report the abuse immediately. It requires civil servants, military personnel and non-governmental employees who observe abuse by virtue of their work to so inform their employer. The employer must notify the competent authority or police of the abuse as soon as it is brought to its attention. The law also prohibits disclosure of the identity of a person who reports abuse without the person's consent or in the cases specified by the implementing regulation of the law. That implementing regulation, which was issued by Minister of Social Affairs Decision No. 43047 of 8/5/1435 A.H. (8/4/2014):

- Requires any public or private entity to notify the Ministry of Labour and Social Development or the police of abuse which it observes as soon as the abuse comes to its attention or is reported to it.
- Provides for the establishment of a centre to receive reports of abuse.
- Provides for the immediate processing of reports by contacting the alleged victim, conducting a risk assessment, conducting a medical evaluation if necessary and adopting all necessary and appropriate measures to deal with the case.
- Requires police departments and other competent security authorities to respond immediately to any request by the Social Protection Unit to enter any location and provide protection for the Protection Unit specialists and the victim.

52. The Law on the Practice of Health Professions promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/59 of 1429 A.H. (2005) requires health practitioners to report any injury that may have resulted from a criminal assault under article 11 of the law. A statute was also issued on methods for dealing with violence and abuse in health institutions under Ministerial Decision No. 56070/24 of 1428 A.H. (2007). The law has been circulated to all health affairs directorates subordinate to the Ministry of Health in the Kingdom. Under the law, committees and action teams were formed in health institutions and tasked with providing protection from violence. These committees and action teams intervene medically as soon as a victim of violence or abuse is admitted. They develop treatment plans and appropriate rehabilitation programmes. They must report domestic violence cases to the social protection committees within 48 hours. A ministerial decision was issued in 1432 A.H. (2011) establishing a unit for protection from violence and abuse in the framework of health institutions. The unit's primary functions include monitoring the performance of the committees and teams in all health institutions that are tasked with protection from violence and abuse, monitoring and studying statistics on violence, developing training plans, promoting the agreement on the Child Support Hotline concluded between the Ministry of Health and the Child Support Hotline Supervisory Board.

53. The website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development lists the agencies that receive reports and the mechanisms for submitting reports using direct and indirect means of communication. The agencies include the Social Protection Department, social protection committees in the regions and regional emirates, Human Rights Commission, National Society for Human Rights, National Family Safety Programme, government and private hospitals, police departments, educational institutions and charitable associations. Reports of violence and other forms of discrimination against women may also be submitted through the electronic portal of the Ministry of Interior or by email to the ministry's Human Rights Department.

54. In order to strengthen the violence complaint intake mechanism, a report intake centre was established on 11/6/1437 A.H. (20/3/2016). The centre is staffed around-the-clock by 70 women. The staff receive domestic violence reports via a central telephone number (1919). In addition, protection teams have been formed in all regions and governorates to receive reports.

55. According to statistics, the social protection committees in all regions handled 8086 abuse reports during 2009-2013. Females represented 86 per cent and males 14 per cent of abuse victims. The age breakdown of victims according to the reports was as follows: 35.9 per cent were 18 years or younger, 36.4 per cent were 19-35, 16.5 per cent were 36-45, 6.7 were 46-80 and 0.5 per cent were 80 or older. Regarding the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim, the statistics show that the perpetrator was typically a relative of the victim (in 93 per cent of the abuse reports); in 3 per cent of the abuse reports, the perpetrator was not a relative of the victim. The statistics gleaned from the reports also show that the most widespread type of abuse was physical abuse (32 per cent), followed by psychological abuse (16.3 per cent), neglect (4.5 per cent) and sexual abuse (3.0 per cent).

56. Regarding the sheltering and hosting of victims, 12 social protection units were established in addition to three child protection centres and nine charitable associations that engage in social protection activities. In addition, there are 17 social protection committees. Victims are sheltered according to defined criteria: Shelter is provided only to women regardless of age and to children below the age of 18; and the victim must have been subjected to an instance of abuse mentioned in the law and its implementing regulation and it is not possible to shelter the victim with any of the victim's relatives. The sheltering of a victim does not require the approval of the parent. Regarding awareness raising efforts, the law and its implementing regulation have been disseminated over a broad scope through the traditional media and social media. Training workshops have been held to familiarize specialists and concerned persons with the law and its implementing regulation and to give them the skills needed to perform their roles in applying the provisions of the law and its implementing regulation. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development held two workshops in 2014 to familiarize participants with the implementing regulation of the law. Participants included many specialists from government agencies and civil society organizations. A series of publications on protection has been issued to raise awareness among members of society regarding abuse. Also, the Human Rights Commission held a number of seminars and training courses in 2014 on the elimination of domestic violence.

57. It should be noted that the information presented above concerning violence against women and the information presented regarding subsequent articles of the Convention is consistent with the Committee's General Recommendations Nos. 12 and 19 issued in 1989 and 1992 respectively.

Articles 3 and 4 and paragraphs 25 and 26 of the concluding comments

58. The Kingdom is engaged in ongoing efforts to support the development of society and its members to ensure that they enjoy their rights equally and fairly. Support for the development of women in particular is an objective of development plans. In addition to what has been mentioned and will be mentioned in Part Two of the present report, support for the development of women at the national level has taken multiple trajectories through different levels in many fields to strengthen women's enjoyment of the rights equally and fairly on a par with men in the framework of the Kingdom's obligations under the Convention. The establishment of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs, which is subordinate to the cabinet, is a quantum leap forward in channelling national efforts toward achieving the development goals set for society in general. The aforesaid council will, among

other things, review, monitor the implementation of, and coordinate economic and development strategies and plans.

59. The Ninth Development Plan (2009-2014) has achieved a number of objectives concerning women, including empowering Saudi women to participate in achieving development objectives, strengthening the status and influence of women in the family and society, developing social welfare programmes for needy groups, combating domestic violence, developing the contribution of women to economic activity, providing support services to enable women to participate, eliminating illiteracy among females, entrenching and strengthening quantitative and qualitative progress in the education of Saudi girls at the various educational levels, developing mechanisms for the disbursement of social security subventions and assistance to female beneficiaries and improving the income of women based on their own efforts. The present report details many of the measures that have been designed to achieve these objectives.

60. The thirteenth objective of the Tenth Development Plan (2015-2019) concerns the empowerment of women and boosting of their contribution to the various areas of development by:

- Increasing the contribution of civil society organizations to efforts to increase the participation of women in development.
- Encouraging the establishment of cooperative women's associations.
- Increasing the participation of women in committees, commissions and specialized councils (domestic and international).
- Developing the support services and facilities needed to empower women to perform their economic and social role.
- Expanding the participation of women in economic activity and increasing employment opportunities for women in various fields to absorb the large supply of female labour and to provide a decent living for women.
- Expanding options that are appropriate for females in scientific, technical and professional specialties.
- Retraining female graduates whose specialties do not conform with labour market requirements.
- Developing appropriate systems for developing the aptitudes and abilities of Saudi girls.
- Reviewing and updating all laws and regulations concerning the working mother.
- Improving health care for women.
- Providing opportunities to women with outstanding abilities to obtain administrative posts in government agencies and universities.

61. Many civil society organizations support the development and advancement of women in economic, social and cultural fields through progressive programmes and mechanisms, most of which are overseen by women who are economic, social and cultural specialists or businesswomen. These activities include the Baraka Loan

Centre, which was initiated by the King Abdul Aziz Philanthropic Society for Women (*Awn*). The society seeks to boost cottage industries by promoting the role of producing women. There is also the Business Incubator Foundation, which helps female entrepreneurs overcome traditional obstacles and provides legal assistance to women, in addition to the Ahsa Philanthropic Society for the Development of Girls, which has initiated programmes to combat poverty by strengthening handicraft activities. Other such activities undertaken by civil society organizations are mentioned below.

Article 5 and paragraphs 11, 12, 15, 16, 41 and 42 of the concluding comments

62. The Kingdom — based on its laws that prohibit discrimination against women, and in the light of the commitments which it has undertaken in respect of the Convention, which has become a part of its laws through its accession to the Convention — has adopted many measures to strengthen awareness of, and to educate people about, human rights, including the rights of women. These measures incorporate the definition appearing in the Convention, in line with General Recommendation No. 3 adopted by the Committee in 1987. They have focused on enhancing public awareness of the Convention and on countering stereotypes and negative customs conducive to feeding discrimination against women and violations that may be committed against women, such as violence, etc. The most salient of these measures are the following:

- Implementation of the first and second stages of the Human Rights Culture Dissemination Programme established by Royal Order No. 8628/MB of 13 October 2009. A number of government agencies participate in the implementation of the programme. Each such agency prepares its own plan based on key principles, namely, the plan must contribute to the implementation of the commitments of the Kingdom pursuant to the treaties which it has ratified, it must be relevant to the problems of society in respect of the violation of human rights or erroneous practices, and it must focus directly on human rights content and standards. The preparation of these plans will pave the way for preparation of a national comprehensive plan for the dissemination of human rights culture over the broadest scale possible.[11]

- The formation of a National Human Rights Education Committee under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Nine government agencies participate in the committee. The committee has: adopted a human rights education plan; published a human rights education guidebook that was circulated to all institutions, schools and universities; published a human rights matrix guide for use in academic curricula; conducted diagnostic surveys to ascertain the status of human rights in school curricula; and issued four reports on human rights education. In addition, training programmes have been developed for human rights educators, with the designation of separate human rights course material for use in higher education institutions. International humanitarian law has been incorporated in the curricula of advanced studies programmes. Several human rights education principles have been adopted, including the strengthening of human rights education through extracurricular and media activities, the incorporation of content drawn from human rights

[11] This section addresses aspects of paras. 44 and 45 of the concluding comments.

principles in academic curricula (integration and amalgamation method), and the incorporation in academic curricula of general concepts for the teaching of human rights.

- The issuance of Ministry of Justice Circular No. 13/T/2599 on 13/2/1426 A.H. (10/4/2004). The circular states that it is prohibited by law to prevent a woman from marrying, or compelling a woman to marry someone without her consent, or prevent a woman from marrying a person who meets the legal requirements for marriage. The circular states that such practices are among the practices of the pre-Islamic age of ignorance and any person who engages in them shall be punished by imprisonment and payment of bail. It further states that judges and preachers must raise the awareness of citizens to ensure that they do not permit such practices.

- Conclusion of a memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation between the Kingdom (represented by the Human Rights Commission) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2012. The memorandum covers important objectives, including: the strengthening of the capacities of Saudi specialists in international human rights law, particularly concerning United Nations mechanisms and the work of specialized international organizations; preparation, development and implementation of specialized training programmes in human rights fields in Saudi Arabia and abroad; preparation of guidebooks for employees of agencies concerned with human rights; and the holding of seminars and specialized courses in human rights.[12] A memorandum of understanding was also concluded between Saudi Arabia (represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the United Nations in 2013 concerning the provision of associate experts in human rights to strengthen capacity building for human rights law specialists in the Kingdom, particularly regarding United Nations mechanisms in the framework of the United Nations Young Professionals Programme. Many women have benefited from this programme. During fiscal year 2015, nine activities were held in the framework of programmes and activities covered by the memorandum of understanding in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. These activities included workshops, symposia, visits and the distribution of publications treating a number of human rights topics. They covered diverse subjects targeting diverse groups, including the preparation of national trainers in the field of human rights, capacity building for male and female employees of the Human Rights Commission in monitoring and investigating human rights cases, and the strengthening of the role of civil society in monitoring human rights cases. Two specialized symposia were held concerning two international human rights treaties to which Saudi Arabia has acceded. Also, a specialized workshop was held to prepare the periodic report of Saudi Arabia on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

- The Human Rights Commission — which is concerned with developing awareness of human rights and spreading a human rights culture under articles 1, 2 and 12 of its statute — has adopted many measures to strengthen awareness of

[12] See Annex No. 1.

women's rights and to combat negative cultural stereotypes that adversely affect women's full enjoyment of human rights and basic freedoms. These measures include the holding of conferences, symposia, workshops and training courses for judges, public prosecutors, lawyers, police officers, employees of government agencies and various groups in society.[13]

63. The Human Rights Commission has also produced visual and printed materials designed to strengthen awareness of human rights, including the rights of women, in the period covered by the present report, including:

- The publication of a monthly rights journal in Arabic, English and French.
- The publication of 84 monthly bulletins in Arabic and English.
- The publication of many works, books and pamphlets, the most salient being the following books (in Arabic): Domestic Violence, the Rights of Married Women in the Saudi Judicial System and the Culture of Human Rights.
- The production of brief awareness-raising films on the prevention of woman from marrying,[14] female domestic workers, the rights of the divorcee and the rights of the mother. The films were aired on multiple television channels and social media sites.

64. The Human Rights Commission has a strategic action plan whose goals include: making respect for and protection of human rights a basic component in the activities and duties of governmental and non-governmental agencies and a basic part of the national culture; and establishing an effective societal partnership for the dissemination and strengthening of the human rights culture among the various segments of Saudi society. The programmes and policies for strengthening and protecting the rights of women, including the spread of awareness of women's rights and the countering of negative stereotypes, focus on the commitments made by Saudi Arabia in respect of international and regional human rights treaties and the declarations, programmes and plans issued by international and regional organizations in the light of the provisions of the Islamic Sharia.[15]

65. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Call and Guidance undertakes awareness raising campaigns to develop awareness of women's rights through the 360 call and guidance offices which it supervises. Awareness of women's rights is also disseminated in mosques and in radio and television programmes by members of the Council of Senior Scholars, other scholars and Islamic jurists who issue admonitions concerning the rights of women and cite Sharia texts that point to the requirement to protect, honour and respect women's rights. They and other agencies that have undertaken awareness raising efforts have played a major role in correcting erroneous practices stemming from an incorrect understanding of Sharia provisions on the rights and duties of men and women. They also seek to correct objectionable practices that are based on a misunderstanding of guardianship and custodianship and the complementary roles of men and women enjoined by the Islamic Sharia, which takes into account the features and characteristics of each sex, without the slightest oppression of either men or women, in full harmony with

[13] See Annex No. 2.

[14] Prevention of a woman from marrying whom she wishes to marry.

[15] This section addresses aspects of paras. 44 and 45 of the concluding comments.

human nature to ensure the stability, prosperity and progress of society. In addition, the General Presidency of Youth Welfare takes advantage of the interest in sports of young men and women, who constitute the largest segment in Saudi society, to raise their awareness and educate them in human rights, particularly the rights of women, through athletic clubs and activities.

66. The Islamic Sharia places responsibility for the proper raising and educating of children equally on the mother and father in the framework of the family. Motherhood and the tasks and roles which it entails are the mother's responsibility. The father has the weighty responsibility of supporting and protecting the family. Both share, without discrimination, in the raising of the children by undertaking duties that are consistent with their respective natures and capabilities to achieve the child's best interest, fairness and the family's enjoyment of security and stability. This approach is in line with paragraph 13 of General Recommendation No. 21 which the Committee adopted in 1994. It emphasizes that the family has only one form in accordance with divine law[16] and international standards,[17] such that it would be unacceptable to recognize new forms of the family that are at variance with human nature.

67. The Convention became a part of Saudi domestic legislation when Saudi Arabia acceded to it. The provisions of the Convention to which Saudi Arabia has committed have the same legal authority as that enjoyed by domestic laws. This is evidenced by the fact that the legal instrument issued upon accession to the Convention (a Royal Decree) is the same instrument by which laws are promulgated in the Kingdom. Article 70 of the Basic Law of Governance states, "Laws, international treaties and agreements and concessions shall be issued and amended by Royal Decrees". The Islamic Sharia governs all laws of the Kingdom. The Basic Law of Governance, article 7, states, "Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives its authority from the Book of God Most High and the Sunnah of his Messenger, both of which govern this Law and all the laws of the State". As to the enforceability of the Convention at the national level, the present report includes information and data reflecting the progress achieved in the enforcement of those provisions of the Convention to which the Kingdom has committed, particularly regarding prevention and protection, prosecution and awareness raising. The head of the Investigation and Prosecution Bureau has issued instructions based on the concepts and definitions appearing in the Conventions and protocols to which the Kingdom has become a party. The promulgation of laws concerning the provisions of the Convention strengthens enforcement of the Convention in practice. In this regard, it should be borne in mind that the Convention includes general principles that prohibit discrimination against women. Principles may be relied upon in court pleadings and convictions or acquittals only to the extent of the authority of the principles. Detailed laws that precisely characterize the offences relating to the Convention and the penalties entailed by such offences must therefore be promulgated.

68. It should be noted that the terms guardianship, custodianship and trusteeship appear frequently in the concluding comments of the Committee and the comments

[16] "He creates the pairs, male and female", Koran, Surat al-Najm, verse 45.

[17] "Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family ...", Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 16.

of other human rights machineries and organizations in respect of the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia. Such comments regard guardianship, custodianship and trusteeship as a derogation of women's rights when in fact they are principles that strengthen human rights in general. For guardianship means the assignment of a man — whether a husband, father or son — to care for a woman's affairs, including covering her expenses. It does not mean, nor does it ever justify, control of a woman or diminution of her status. Custodianship is an arrangement whereby the person appointed custodian,[18] whether a man or a woman, acts on behalf of an incompetent person or a person with diminished competence. Trusteeship is a type of agency that is established after the death of the testator. It includes care for the financial affairs of minors by the trustee. It is established for a man or woman and is usually established for a mother.

69. It should be noted that the misuse of the principles established in the Islamic Sharia (guardianship, custodianship and trusteeship) as a pretext for controlling women and infringing their rights remains limited to erroneous individual practices. The law has joined forces with relevant institutions to combat and eliminate such practices. The aforesaid principles have no bearing on the issue of women driving cars, which is purely a social issue, inasmuch as the right to freedom of movement is guaranteed for all under the laws of the Kingdom.

Article 6 and paragraphs 23 and 24 of the concluding comments

70. The Islamic Sharia forbids trafficking in persons of all forms, including trafficking in women. Saudi Arabia has adopted measures to eliminate trafficking in persons based on three principles: prevention, protection and prosecution. One key measure is the promulgation of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Offences Law under Royal Decree No. M/40 of 21/07/1430 A.H. (14/7/2009). The aforesaid law harmonizes with international and regional standards for combating trafficking in persons offences and complements the efforts of the State to protect individuals, including women, from various forms of exploitation. Article 1 of the law defines trafficking in persons as "the use, recruitment, transportation, harbouring or receipt of a person for the purpose of exploitation". Article 2 of the law prohibits "all forms of trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual assault, forced labour or services, mendicancy, slavery or slavery-like practices, servitude or the removal of organs or for conducting medical experiments thereon". The law describes the various forms of, and the penalty for, trafficking in persons. The penalty may be imprisonment of up to 15 years and/or a fine of 1 million riyals (US$ 266,000). The law provides greater protection for victims in general and women and children in particular. Article 4 of the law provides for harsher penalties in cases where the victim of the trafficking offence is a woman or child. Article 5 of the law deems irrelevant the consent of victims in any offence specified in the law.

71. A Standing Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons has been formed in the Human Rights Commission. It includes representatives of the ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Social Affairs, Labour, Culture and Information as well as the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution. This committee is a key national mechanism for enforcing the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Offences Law.

[18] According to the Islamic Sharia.

72. The security agencies apprehend perpetrators of human trafficking offences and refer them to the investigation authorities. The accused are then referred to the competent courts to be tried. Many judicial judgments have been issued against persons accused of committing human trafficking offences. The National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Committee and a number of government agencies and civil society organizations monitor human trafficking offences and the sheltering of victims. They also provide victims with financial assistance and social, psychological, legal, educational and training services.

73. All parties may seek remedies and claim rights by filing a grievance or claim directly with the labour dispute settlement commissions and labour offices located throughout the Kingdom or by contacting the central call centre linked to those commissions and offices, which provides translating services in multiple languages.

74. The competent agencies continually adopt awareness-raising measures to protect and strengthen the rights of workers. They publish booklets in multiple languages that explain Labour Laws and concepts relating to trafficking in persons and forced labour. These books are distributed to the embassies of the Kingdom in the concerned countries. A number of agencies concerned with human rights implement media campaigns as part of the Human Rights Culture Dissemination Program. The competent agencies in the Kingdom conclude, with the concerned countries, bilateral agreements requiring male and female workers to attend educational and training courses to familiarize them with their rights and duties.

75. Saudi Arabia reaffirms, consistent with its response concerning article 6 of the Convention in its previous report, that all acts of prostitution are criminalized at the national level based on the provisions of the Islamic Sharia, and that the criminalization of these practices, which offend the honour of women, is a first step toward eliminating all forms of sexual exploitation to which women are subjected.

76. Regarding the rights of female domestic workers, the Regulations on Domestic Workers and the Like have been issued (see paragraph 18 of the present report). These regulations are a key step in the regulation of the relationship between an employer and a domestic worker and in ensuring that the rights and obligations of the two parties are upheld. Under the regulations, an employer may not assign a domestic worker to perform work that is not agreed in the contract or that endangers the worker's health, or harms his/her dignity or is for a third party. The regulations also require the employer to pay the worker the agreed wage at the end of each month without delay with written documentation of the worker's receipt of his/her monthly wage and to provide appropriate housing for domestic workers.

77. The Human Rights Commission has aired short films in the framework of the Human Rights Culture Dissemination Programme. The films deal with protecting against violations of the rights of female domestic workers and the dangers posed by such violations. Also, education programmes have helped reinforced the relevant agencies' protection of female domestic workers from human trafficking, violence and other human rights violations by familiarizing domestic workers with the ways and means of seeking appropriate remedies. Regarding treatment of the causes of human trafficking, particularly trafficking of female domestic workers, Saudi Arabia has signed a number of bilateral agreements with the countries of origin of female domestic workers. The agreements serve the interests of all parties and prevent the exploitation and violation of the rights of female domestic workers. They have been

concluded with India, Niger, Uganda, Djibouti, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. In addition, the Standing Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons, in carrying out its functions mentioned in paragraph 34 above, studies the causes of the evolution of human trafficking practices and has issued two reports containing information on the measures taken to combat human trafficking offences through prevention, protection and prosecution.

Part Two (arts. 7-9)

Article 7 and paragraphs 25 and 26 of the concluding comments

78. All Saudi citizens, both male and female, are entitled to participate in public and political life in the Kingdom through participation in decision-making, voting and standing for elections. Regarding the political participation of women, women take the pledge in accordance with article 6 of the Basic Law of Governance, which states, "Citizens shall pledge allegiance to the King on the basis of the Book of God, the Sunnah of his Messenger and submission and obedience in times of hardship and ease, fortune and adversity". The aforesaid article does not distinguish between men and women. Article 43 of the Basic Law of Governance, as mentioned above, entitles each citizen, without discrimination, to address the public authorities in matters of concern to the citizen. The participation of women in the Consultative Council has gradually increased. Initially, six women were appointed as non-full-time advisors. Measures were taken to gradually increase the number. Under Royal Order No. A/44 of 29/2/1434 (12/1/2013), women became members of the Council, holding a minimum of 20 per cent of its seats. Thirty women participated in the Council's sixth session (15/1/2013-2/12/2016).

79. There are no legal provisions prohibiting women from exercising the right to vote or stand for elected office. The Municipal Elections Law, which the Committee mentions in paragraph 16 of its list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports, establishes the equal right of male and citizens to vote for and stand for election to municipal councils provided they meet the conditions for doing so.

80. The third ever municipal elections were held in 2015. They were observed by civil society organizations and reported by the domestic and international media. Eighty-one per cent of women entitled to vote voted. Previously, women were permitted to participate in voting for and standing for election to the councils of chambers of commerce. A number of women have been elected to these councils. In recent years, women have been elected to posts in the councils of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the cities of Jeddah and Dammam. Two Saudi businesswomen were elected to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Jeddah in the first elections in which women in the Kingdom participated.

81. The right to hold senior and decision-making positions is not limited to men to the exclusion of women. No law of the Kingdom prevents women from holding such positions. The Civil Service Law issued by Royal Decree No. A/49 of 1/7/1397 A.H. (18/6/1977), article 1, states, "Ability shall be the basis for the selection of employees to hold public positions". Thus, nothing prevents a woman from holding a senior government post or other public position. In 2015, woman held more than 40 per cent of the public positions covered by the Civil Service Law. Saudi women

have been appointed to senior posts and leadership positions in government institutions, universities, etc.

82. Women participate effectively in civil society organizations concerned with public affairs, human rights, etc. The laws and regulations governing the establishment of civil society organizations of all forms do not discriminate between men and women in respect of the right to participate in the establishment of such organizations. Women represented 25 per cent of the founding members of the National Society for Human Rights. Women participate effectively in the social service and development centres. These centres are social institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. They seek to: develop local communities in the social, health, vocational and economic fields; generate social change; increase household income by encouraging families to produce and rationalize household expenditures; provide opportunities for women to participate positively; help eliminate illiteracy; and conduct the social research and studies required for the activities and services of the centres.

83. Many associations have been established to protect the rights of children, women, persons with disabilities and prisoners and to provide social and humanitarian services. The most prominent associations include the King Khalid Foundation founded in 16/12/1421 A.H. (11/3/2001), Nahda Philanthropic Society for Women founded in 1382 A.H. (1962), Wafa Women's Philanthropic Association founded in 1395 A.H. (1975), Mawaddah Women's Charity Society for the Reduction of Divorce and its effects founded on 8/2/1430 A.H. (3/2/2009) and other private associations and foundations.

Article 8

84. Saudi laws provide Saudi women with opportunities to represent the government at the regional and international levels through their work in Saudi embassies, consulates and missions and through their participation in Saudi delegations to regional and international conferences, forums and machineries. Many women who are qualified to work in Saudi embassies and representations abroad have joined the Diplomatic Corps. Eighty-one Saudi women held diplomatic posts in 2014 compared to none in 2008. There were 108 female employees enrolled in advanced studies programmes and training programmes in 2014 compared to 34 in 2008. Saudi women have been appointed to international posts in an unprecedented manner. For example, a Saudi woman held the post of executive director of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and assistant secretary-general of the United Nations. Saudi women also participate in international and regional organizations, including the United Nations, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, League of Arab States and the Corporation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf.

85. Many Saudi women have participated in Saudi delegations to international and regional forums. For example, the Saudi delegations participating in contractual committees and ordinary sessions of the Human Rights Commission and Universal Periodic Review sessions have included Saudi women who are specialists in areas of concern to these machineries. A high number women participated in the Saudi delegation mentioned in concluding comment 3 of the Committee (CEDAW/C/SAU/CO/2). Women constituted 39 per cent of the 21-member Saudi

delegation to the fourth session of the first round of the Universal Periodic Review in 2009. Saudi delegations participating in the meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union have included many women who are advisors and members of the Consultative Council.

Article 9 and paragraphs 27 and 28 of the concluding comments

86. Reaffirming what is stated in the combined initial and second periodic report of Saudi Arabia, which was submitted pursuant to the Convention, the Saudi Arabian Nationality Law regulates all matters relating to the right of eligible persons to obtain Saudi nationality without discrimination on the basis of sex. The aforesaid law states that a Saudi woman need not forfeit her nationality if she marries a foreigner unless she decides to adopt her husband's nationality according to the pertinent law and so declares. A Saudi woman married to a foreigner may reclaim her Saudi Arabian nationality upon the termination of her marital relationship after she returns to reside in Saudi Arabia. The law entitles the children of a Saudi woman married to a foreign man, upon their attainment to the age of majority, to select and be granted Saudi Arabian nationality if they meet the requirements.

87. A number of measures have been taken concerning article 9, the most salient being:

- The issuance of Cabinet Decision No. 406 of 27/12/1433 A.H. (12/11/2012):
    - Approving the transfer of the employment services of the children of a Saudi woman married to a foreign man to their mother if the children reside in Saudi Arabia.
    - Entitling the mother to bring her children to Saudi Arabia if they are abroad, in which case the State is obliged to bear the residency fees for the children.
    - Permitting the children to work in the private sector without the transfer of their services; treating the children on a par with Saudis in respect of entitlement to education and medical treatment and allowing the children to be taken into account in the calculation of the rate of Saudization of jobs in the private sector.
    - Permitting a Saudi woman married to a foreign man to bring her husband to Saudi Arabia from abroad or transfer his employment services to Saudi Arabia if he is resident in Saudi Arabia and so wishes, and permitting the husband to work in the private sector provided he has a recognized passport.
- The issuance of Cabinet Decision No. 349 of 3/11/1434 A.H. (9/9/2013) approving guarantees of housing and subsistence for Saudi children residing abroad and their non-Saudi mothers when they return to Saudi Arabia. The decision requires the children of Saudi men and non-Saudi women to be treated as Saudis in respect of public education, university education and treatment in government hospitals. It grants the non-Saudi mothers of Saudi children permanent residence in Saudi Arabia, and requires the State bear the residency fees of the mothers. It also allows such mothers to work for a third party in the private sector and to be taken into account within the Saudization

percentages. This measure is an additional guarantee above and beyond the provisions of article 9 of the Convention.

88. The Saudi Arabian Nationality Law seeks primarily to allow children to acquire the nationality of their father. It also adopts the principle of mono-nationality and does not provide for dual nationality. Accordingly, the Kingdom has expressed its reservation to article 9, paragraph 2 of the Convention as stated in Part One of its combined initial and second periodic reports.

Part Three (arts. 10-14)

Article 10 and paragraphs 29 and 30 of the concluding comments

89. Saudi laws guarantee all citizens the right to a free education without discrimination. Article 30 of the Basic Law of Governance states, "The State shall provide public education and shall be committed to combating illiteracy". Article 233 of the General Education Policy in the Kingdom, which was issued under Cabinet Decision No. 779 of 16-27/11/1389 A.H. (27/26/11/1969), affirms that all types and levels of education are free. Article 15 of the policy emphasizes the linkage of education at all levels with the general development plan of the State, which aims to achieve a true partnership between men and women. The Kingdom, believing in the importance of the role of education in achieving sustainable development and giving effect to human rights, allocated 22 per cent of the 2016 general government budget to education. In 1959-1960, the budget for girls' education totalled only 2 million riyals (US$ 533,000). By contrast, the Ninth Development Plan allocates 59.66 per cent of the education budget for girls' education compared to 40.34 per cent for boys' education. Extensive efforts have also been made to provide educational services and combat illiteracy based on gender equality.

90. Regarding public education, during 2008-2014, the net enrolment rates of girls increased at high rates compared to the enrolment rates for boys. The net enrolment rate for girls in primary education during 2015 was 98.67 per cent compared to 84.28 per cent in 2008, an increase of 14.38 per cent. The net enrolment rate for boys in primary education during 2015 was 97.17 per cent compared to 85.46 per cent in 2008, an increase of 11.71 per cent. The net enrolment rate for girls in middle school during 2015 was 91.37 per cent compared to 67.5 per cent in 2008, an increase of 23.78 per cent. The net enrolment rate for boys in middle school during 2015 was 85.38 per cent compared to 62.28 per cent in 2008, an increase of 23.1 per cent. The net enrolment rate for girls in secondary school during 2015 was 87.89 per cent compared to 51.53 per cent in 2008, an increase of 36.36 per cent. The net enrolment rate for boys in secondary school during 2015 was 80.66 per cent compared to 50.43 per cent in 2008, an increase of 30.23 per cent. In 2013, girls' and boys' schools accounted for 53.5 per cent and 46.5 per cent respectively of all schools in the Kingdom. In 2015, the percentage of female students in public education was 50.23 per cent compared to 49.76 per cent for boys (see Annex No. 3). The Ministry of Education has been concerned with the universalization of kindergarten education. In 2015, there were 3740 kindergartens, 24,141 nursery school students, 107,804 kindergarten students and 157,842 preschool students.

91. In 2015, enrolees in higher education institutions totalled 749,375 females and 778,394 males (only four female were enrolled in higher education in 1961). In 2015, 33,536 females and 121,958 males were studying for an intermediate diploma and 34,674 females and 36,501 males were studying in graduate programmes. Academic departments in universities for females have continued to expand, offering 21 subject areas, including new specialties such as engineering, journalism, law and agriculture. Educational institutions continue to implement national plans to prepare women to work in universities as faculty members through academic programmes in Saudi Arabia and abroad to address the large shortage of female faculty and support staff. Female faculty in higher education institutions in 2015 totalled 30,893 (40.49 per cent) compared to 10,988 (33 per cent) in 2008.

92. Regarding vocational training, the number of technical colleges for females throughout the Kingdom has increased over the past decade. There are now 18 such colleges, the first having been established in 2007. These colleges provide quality training to women to enhance their skills and qualify them to enter the labour market. In just under seven years, graduates of technical colleges for girls have come to total 13,596. A Vocational Guidance and Employment Coordination Centre has been established to supervise, guide and develop policies for directing individuals toward vocations, skills and training consistent with labour market requirements.

93. The educational system in Saudi Arabia is based fundamentally on gender equality in all its aspects, including admission, enrolment, curricula, examinations, qualifications of instructors and lecturers and the quality of educational facilities and equipment. Moreover, women have enjoyed greater concern in this regard through affirmative action, particularly with the continued establishment of a number of university campuses for young women, such as Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, the university campuses associated with Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University and King Saud University.

94. Regarding scholarships and assistance, the existing programmes are based on equal opportunity for both sexes based on admission requirements. Academic scholarships for female students have increased appreciably through the Foreign Study Programme of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and the scholarships provided for study in Saudi universities. The number of female students studying abroad during 2015 totalled 34,674, compared to 8,128 in 2008, an increase of 27 per cent. The number of female graduates of foreign study programmes during 2015 totalled 3,720, compared to 201 in 2008, an increase of 20 per cent.

95. The Kingdom has devoted special concern to continuing education programmes in line with its aspirations as defined in successive development plans to reduce illiteracy among females by promoting legislative and non-legislative measures. The most salient measures include the implementation of the Compulsory Education Decree, the establishment of a government adult education department to prepare adult education plans and programmes, the opening of more general education schools in in villages and remote agricultural settlements, and the opening of illiteracy eradication centres in correctional facilities for women, facilities for the care of girls, facilities for the care of the elderly, charitable associations and societies for the memorization of the Noble Koran.

96. At the end of 1436 A.H. (2015), the illiteracy rate was 5.31 per cent compared to 60 per cent 25 years ago and illiteracy among women had been reduced to 8.27 per cent. In 1972, only five schools existed for the eradication of illiteracy among women. By 2013, 1,400 female students were enrolled in 47 literacy classes. In 2013, 1,438 women were enrolled in 304 literacy classes. More than 1,288,000 females have benefited from the illiteracy eradication centres over the past 43 years.

97. The Ministry of Education has launched flexible programmes for women in their places of residence. These programmes include: the Society without Illiteracy Programme; City without Illiteracy Programme; Convoys of Light Project, which involves the use of mobile, computer-equipped classrooms that visit villages to eradicate illiteracy and raise awareness among rural woman; the Educated Neighbourhood Programme; and the Summer Awareness-Raising/Illiteracy-Eradication Campaign, which provides participants with financial incentives and support services, such as school supplies, transportation, etc. (Annex No. 4).

98. A field study on the female dropout rate from basic education in the Riyadh region conducted by the Ministry of Education shows the following dropout rates for female students: secondary school, 1.16 per cent; middle school, 0.4 per cent; and primary school, 0.26 per cent. Measures have been taken to limit the female school dropout rate, including awareness-raising measures and the holding of training courses for school principals, counsellors and teachers to provide them with the skills for best dealing with girls based on knowledge of the developmental characteristics and psychological requirements of female students in different age groups. Student guidance programmes are implemented in educational institutions and the regional administrations to help limit the dropout rate. Female students who have interrupted their education are encouraged to enrol in school. Their families are also encouraged to promote such enrolment and are helped to understand the reasons for dropping out. Laws and regulations on public education admission and registration permit female students who have interrupted their education for long periods to complete their education through the programmes at regular adult education centres and middle and secondary adult education schools. The Minister of Education issued Decision No. 206407 of 24/7/1437 A.H. (2/5/2016) forming a committee to study the dropout situation and school enrolment rates among school-aged children. The Ministry of Education has launched a plan to achieve 100 per cent enrolment in primary school, 98 per cent enrolment of primary school graduates in middle school, and 95 per cent enrolment of graduates of middle school in secondary school. The plan also seeks to increase the private sector's rate of participation in the establishment of new schools to 15 per cent by the end of the period covered by the plan.

Article 11 and paragraphs 31 and 32 of the concluding comments

99. The laws of the Kingdom guarantee the right to work without discrimination, as affirmed in previous reports of Saudi Arabia. National plans have focused on facilitating employment for all qualified persons in the government or private sector pursuant to article 28 of the Basic Law of Governance. This objective is achieved by enacting laws and regulations and adopting measures based on gender equality. Special importance is attached to women in order to achieve the objectives of successive development plans to enhance women's enjoyment of their right to work.

100. Regarding equal opportunity, hiring criteria, wage equality and social security, article 1 of the Civil Service Law, which regulates labour in the public sector, states, "Ability shall be the basis for the selection of employees to hold public positions". All male and female public-sector employees are subject to the same laws and regulations concerning the Civil Service, including in respect of hiring, transfer, promotion, training, wages, leaves, health protection, job security and retirement. Both men and women have recourse to the various levels of remedies to lodge a grievance against discrimination.

101. Article 3 of the Labour Law, which regulates labour in the private sector, states, "Work is a right of the citizen. This right may be exercised if the conditions stipulated in this law are fulfilled. Citizens shall be equal in respect of the right to work". Saudi Arabia is a party to the Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value (No. 100) and the Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation (No. 111). Ministerial Decision No. 1/2370 of 18/9/1430 A.H. (28/08/2010) affirms the prohibition of discrimination in respect of wages between male and female workers for work of equal value. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development established a Wage Protection Programme under Ministerial Decision No. 803 of 12/2/1434 A.H. (26/12/2012). Phased implementation of the decision began in June 2013. Under the programme, enterprises pay workers' wages through domestic banks and the wage files of the workers are submitted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development electronically. The enterprises' monthly wage payment statements are tracked and compared with the statements recorded in the ministry to monitor the enterprises' obligation to pay wages based on the agreed times and amounts.

102. Working women benefit from all provisions of the Labour Law concerning wages, paid leaves, severance pay, etc. They also benefit, on a par with men, from the Unemployment Insurance Law and job search assistance programmes in respect of the assistance amount and duration and training programmes provided to jobseekers. The Human Resource Fund supports the employment of women. Women also benefit from the Social Insurance Law concerning pensions and compensation for work injuries and occupational hazards, and enterprise owners must record their female and male employees in the system data. Working women in the private sector can also resort, on a par with men, to the remedies relating to their fields of work.

103. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development has initiated the implementation of a national plan to expand employment opportunities for Saudi women that are suited to their nature. The plan is based on four main pivots covering a number of subprogrammes, namely direct employment, employment mechanism programmes, programmes for dealing with the challenges of employing women and providing support services and programmes for the development and promotion of legislation and statutes concerning the employment of women. Many decisions specifying the regulatory and procedural frameworks for the expansion of the employment of women have been issued and followed up, including decisions regulating the employment of women in factories and commercial complexes, the feminization of positions in stores that sell women's needs and other decisions regulating the employment of women in retail stores, kitchens and family recreation parks.

104. Under recent amendments to the Labour Law, which are mentioned above in Part One of the present report, employers that employ 50 or more workers must annually provide training and qualification to at least 12 per cent of their Saudi employees, both men and women, who work in sectors covered by the Labour Law. This percentage, which was previously 6 per cent, also includes Saudi employees whose tuition has been paid by their employer.

105. Regarding the prohibition on dismissal due to pregnancy or maternity leave, the regulations of the Kingdom prohibit dismissal from employment for any reason pertaining to marriage or maternity. Moreover, the Civil Service Law entitles a female employee to exceptional leave of up to 10 years to accompany her husband outside the locale of her employment. It further entitles her to: sick leave for a number of conditions resulting from pregnancy, postpartum leave and leave to care for a newborn; and to maternity leave for up to three years throughout her employment according to the arrangement mentioned in article 22 of the Leave Regulations. The Labour Law grants women working in the private sector the right to request maternity leave to care for a newborn, leave to accompany a sick relative requiring treatment or to be with a child, exceptional leave and leave if her spouse dies. Article 156 of the Labour Law prohibits the dismissal a female worker during a period of illness resulting from pregnancy or childbirth provided the illness is corroborated in a certified medical certificate. The recent amendments to the Labour Law mentioned above take into account the conditions of the working woman. If her husband dies, the law grants her leave for the Iddah (legally prescribed waiting period during which a woman may not remarry after being widowed) of four months and 10 days from the date of death. She has the right to extend this leave as unpaid leave if she is pregnant until she gives birth. Under the aforesaid amendments, women may also distribute their fully paid maternity leave as they wish, starting such leave as early as four weeks before their due date. They may extend such leave for one month without pay without prejudice to their annual paid leave. When a woman gives birth to a sick or disabled child whose medical condition requires her to be with the child, she is entitled to leave of one month with full pay from the end of the maternity leave period; she may extend this leave for a month without pay. Also, the leave period in the event of the death of a male or female worker's ascendants, descendants or spouse and the marriage leave period have been extended to five days instead of three days.

106. Regarding the provision of social support services, the Kingdom has encouraged the establishment of nurseries for the care of working women's children. This includes the provision of financial support to private nurseries. There are a number of government and private nurseries in several regions. However, they do not currently cover the needs of working women in view of the increase in the number of working women. The Labour Law requires employers who employ 50 or more workers to provide a suitable location where there are an adequate number of childcare providers to care for female employees' children age six and under if there are 10 or more such children. The law entitles the minister to require an employer who employs 100 or more female workers in a single city to establish a nursery school himself, or to partner with other employers in the city to establish a nursery school, or to contract with an existing nursery to care for the female employees' children up to age six during work hours.

107. Regarding the provision of special protection to working women during pregnancy, the Labour Law, article 149, prohibits the employment of women in dangerous jobs, harmful industries and activities harmful to health or liable to expose women to specific hazards. Article 151 of the same law prohibits women from working for six weeks after they give birth. Article 153 of the law requires an employer to provide medical care to a working woman during pregnancy and childbirth. A total of 1,116 nurseries have been established throughout the Kingdom to care for the children of women who work in education.

108. The Labour Law, article 122, requires every employer to adopt the necessary precautions to protect workers from hazards, occupational diseases and machinery and ensure work protection and safety. The aforesaid law prohibits the employment of women in hazardous jobs or harmful industries. Article 153 of the law requires an employer to provide medical care to a working woman during pregnancy and childbirth. Article 154 of the law entitles a woman to return to her job after giving birth and to take rest periods totalling one hour per day to nurse her newborn, without prejudice to her right to take the rest periods granted to all workers and to calculate the nursing periods among her actual work hours with no reduction in her pay.

109. Many ministerial decisions have been issued to protect workers' rights, particularly Minister of Labour Decision No. 2425 of 3/6/1434 A.H. (14/4/2013), which specifies the situations in which services provided to an employer are suspended. Such situations include the enterprise's failure to comply with the Wage Protection Programme, the enterprise's employment of women and juveniles in hazardous jobs and harmful industries, and the enterprise's failure to adopt the necessary precautions to protect workers from occupational hazards and diseases and machinery and to ensure work protection and safety. The law conditions reinstatement of services on the correction of these situations.

110. To ensure the application of the Labour Law and international conventions relating to labour as a human right, a number of supervisory measures have been adapted concerning the inspections conducted by the Ministry of Labour. Ministry of Labour inspectors conduct field visits to work sites to ascertain the conditions in establishments. A Guide to the Inspection of Establishments has been prepared. It states the measures that establishments must undertake to comply with the Labour Law and seeks to raise the awareness of establishments and workers. An operations room has also been established to support labour inspectors and improve their enforcement of the Labour Law. The amendments to the Labour Law have enabled the Ministry of Labour to enhance its inspection capabilities by seeking the assistance of qualified persons outside the ministry to perform inspection tasks. The amendments also grant inspectors broader authorities. If an inspector confirms, during an inspection, the existence of a violation of the Labour Law or the regulations or decisions issued to enforce it, the inspector must prepare an affidavit, whereas previously the inspector was required to only provide advice and guidance. The amendments also expand the penalties for violating the law to include financial penalties of up to 100,000 riyals (US$ 26,000), closure of the establishment for up to 30 days or closure of the establishment permanently for certain violations. Penalties may be doubled if a violation is repeated.

111. Regarding remedies, many labour commissions and departments of the High Commission for the Settlement of Labour Disputes have been established to expand the scope of labour litigation, provide easier access to labour litigation and reduce the duration of labour litigation. The ministry provides a central phone number (920001173) for the receipt of complaints in eight languages.

112. Women employed in the government sector increased from 14.70 per cent in 2008 to 19.6 per cent in the second half of 2014. The percentage of Saudi women employed in the public business sector[19] was 2.80 per cent in the second half of 2015. The revised economic participation rate for Saudi women rose from 11.5 per cent in 2008 to 17.40 per cent in the second half of 2015. The increase in the percentage of women participating in the labour force stems primarily from progress in education, improved labour market indicators and the changing requirements of the labour market.

113. Women's participation in the labour force has risen steadily, but continues to fall short of the targets of Saudi policies and programmes regarding the empowerment of women and the strengthening of their right to work. Statistics for 2015 show that the Saudi labour force comprised 11,912,208 persons, while the number of employed persons in the second half of 2015 totalled 11,484,656, for an unemployment rate of 5.60 per cent. The unemployment rate among Saudis 11.50 per cent. The unemployment rate is 5.60 per cent among Saudi males and 33.80 per cent among Saudi females.

Article 12 and paragraphs 33 and 34 of the concluding comments

114. The Basic Law of Governance, article 31, provides for the right of both men and women to receive health care, stating "The State shall be concerned with public health and shall provide health care to every citizen and his family in the event of emergencies, sickness, disability and old age". Health care is a basic right of every person. All health laws and procedures in effect in the Kingdom guarantee women the right to receive health care. There is no restrictive condition on the exercise of this right, which is guaranteed to foreign women residing in the Kingdom through the cooperative health insurance system and other relevant systems. Moreover, the laws in effect in Saudi Arabia require government hospitals to provide the necessary emergency medical care regardless of the nationality or legal status of the person requiring such care.

115. Efforts continue to be made to improve health services for beneficiaries based primarily on need and taking into account gender equality. These efforts have focused on the following areas: mother and child care; inoculation programmes; health care for persons with disabilities and the elderly; health care for students; mental health care; health care in accidents, emergencies and disasters; combating of infectious diseases; treatment of chronic diseases; organ transplant; and other components of comprehensive health care as well as health care support infrastructure. The budget allocated to the Ministry of Health rose from 22.8 billion riyals (US$ 6 billion) in 2008 to 62 billion riyals (US$ 16.5 billion) in 2015. The number of primary health care centres in all governorates and administrative areas of the Kingdom during the period covered by the present report increased by 52.33 per

[19] Which is part of the government sector

cent to 2281. These centres provide primary health care to beneficiaries, including female Saudi citizens and foreign female residents.

116. These efforts have yielded an improvement in the general situation in some areas. The following indicators show the magnitude of this improvement and its effect on women's health in particular:

- An increase in the average life expectancy at birth from 53 in 1970 to 75.7 for females and 73.1 for males — i.e., an overall average life expectancy of 75 years — in 2015.
- A decline in the rate of maternal mortality during birth from 48 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 14 in 2014.
- The percentage of births under skilled medical supervision increased from 88 per cent in 1990 to 98 per cent in 2014.
- The rate of immunization of mothers against neonatal tetanus was 98.1 per cent in 2014.
- The rate of pregnant mothers who receive health care from health care professionals increased from 88 per cent in 1990 to 98 per cent in 2014.
- Cases of affliction with infectious diseases targeted by immunization per 100,000 of the population has dropped to the lowest level for this indicator.

117. During the period covered by the present report, the competent agencies implemented programmes and machineries to improve women's health, including:

- A woman's health early detection clinic that provides mobile services — including early detection of diabetes, high blood pressure and osteoporosis — and raises health awareness. Implementation of this programme began in October 2014. As of March 2016, 6,089 women have received examinations to detect diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and early mammogram detection of breast cancer. In addition, 274,272 lectures were given inside and outside the health centres and hospitals, 12,483 seminars were held inside and outside health centres and hospitals, 4,827,307 health booklets, posters and pamphlets were printed and disseminated, 109 capacity enhancement training courses were held, and 9,465 activities were organized on international days and occasions in the regions and governorates of the Kingdom during 2014.
- Health education programmes to protect against anaemia and iron deficiency are conducted continuously in the schools, shopping malls and waiting rooms of medical establishments.
- Advanced Pregnancy Programme.
- National Programme to Support Natural Breast-Feeding.
- Early Breast Cancer Detection Programme.
- Premarital Screening Programme. Screening is provided to detect certain inherited and infectious diseases in persons interested in marrying, such as Thalassemia, sickle cell anaemia, hepatitis C and B and HIV. More than 3 million persons have been tested since the programme was established in 2004.

- Programmes to counter the use of narcotics and psychoactive substances.
- Programmes to raise awareness of the need for healthy, balanced nutrition.
- Programmes to prevent and avoid the causes of chronic diseases and cancer.
- Epidemiological surveillance system.
- Programme to combat smoking and raise awareness of the harm caused by smoking.

118. As part of the State's human development strategy, programmes have been developed improve the scientific level and capabilities of working national cadres and to encourage them to specialize in all health and medical professions. The focus has been on developing training inputs and on the ongoing development of curricula and training methods. Special attention has been given to scientific and field applications, the establishment of training rules and regulations and domestic and foreign study missions. In 2014/2015, the medical schools and colleges admitted 61,420 students (46.5 per cent of them females) and graduated 6,568 students (46.05 per cent of them females).

119. In order to limit medical errors, including medical errors affecting the health of women, a Serious Events Observation Programme has been established. Under the program, events are recorded, studied and analysed to ascertain the causes of medical errors and ways to address them. A Patient Safety Programme has also been established. It involves the review of clinical safety and the conduct of an annual evaluation of all hospitals. A Clinical Review Programme has also been established based on 49 medical indicators that are examined in each hospital to detect any treatment delays. A Medicine Safety Programme has also been established to monitor medicine errors, determine their causes and address them.

120. Regarding the elderly, a National Strategy for the Elderly 2010-2015 was adopted. The strategy covers physical, mental, cognitive and psychological health, social care. It was implemented in 100 facilities in its first stage.

121. In addition to the efforts of the Human Rights Commission to raise awareness of human rights mentioned in the present report, measures have been taken to raise awareness of the right to health. They include:

- The broad dissemination of a document on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Patient, with a requirement that hospitals display the document conspicuously in anaesthesiology departments, corridors and patient rest areas.
- The holding of training courses and symposia to provide education and training concerning the document on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Patient.
- Dissemination of the document on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Patient through social activities.

122. Regarding health problems unrelated to maternity, the rate of incidence of HIV has declined under the Ninth Development Plan. This has been achieved through numerous efforts, including the spreading of awareness of the disease, the targeting of high-risk groups, reduction of risks by increasing the number of consultation and examination clinics, assurance of the safety of blood transfusions and prevention of

HIV transmission by following healthy practices. The cumulative number of HIV cases detected as of end-2015 totalled 22,952, including 1,191 cases that were detected during 2015. Treatment is provided to all persons living with this disease. Measures have been taken to control this virus and to prevent it from spreading. The National Programme to Combat HIV is a pivot of national efforts to combat and prevent this disease. The programme seeks to:

1. Strengthen the availability, exchange and use of strategic information regarding HIV to guide the evidence-based development and implementation of policies, programmes and services.
2. Expand the scope of and improve the quality of HIV prevention programmes and services for the most at-risk populations in order to reach all target groups.
3. Improve the quality of the main HIV prevention programmes and other services for the population in general, with a particular focus on the target groups.
4. Strengthen the quality and expand the scope of the coverage and use of comprehensive treatment, care and support (self) for recovering HIV patients according to international standards.
5. Strengthen the social, legal and political environments to provide a multi-sectoral national response to HIV, with special attention focused on persons that have the virus and the population groups most at risk.
6. Strengthening and building of technical, organizational and institutional capacities to coordinate, implement, monitor and evaluate decentralization in order to respond effectively with a multisectoral approach to HIV.

123. The incidence of malaria declined to 2620 cases in 2015, including 83 local cases (0.48 cases per 100,000 of the population).

124. A programme to eradicate tuberculosis began to be implemented in 1998 and was fully implemented in all regions of the Kingdom as of 2000, reducing tuberculosis incidence from 18.6 cases per 100,000 population in 1990 to 11 cases per 100,000 of the population in 2013. All of the tuberculosis cases have been detected and treated using the Directly Observed Treatment Short course.

125. Development programmes and health policies and programmes have sought to improve the level of health services provided to residents of rural areas to achieve urban-rural parity regarding the right to health and health services. Obstacles facing rural women in accessing health services have been surmounted. In addition to the preceding, budgets have been allocated to build a number of medical campuses, hospitals and primary care centres in different regions of the Kingdom. Fifteen hospitals were inaugurated in 2013, adding 2,890 beds. In 2014, action was taken to put into operation 35 hospital projects that will have a total capacity for 3,650 beds and will add 2,930 beds. Work is now under way on the construction of 123 hospital projects that will have a total of 32,000 beds and will add 24,181 beds. Royal Order No. 3404 of 2/6/1433 A.H. (24/4/2012) provides for the expansion of the King Abdullah Medical City in Mecca, construction of the King Khalid Medical City in the Eastern Region, construction of the King Faisal Medical City to serve the

southern regions of the Kingdom and the construction of the Prince Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Medical City in Jawf.

126. Regarding the enabling of female non-Saudi nationals to access health services, in addition to what is mentioned in paragraph 123 above, emergency medical cases are admitted by the emergency departments in the government and private hospitals regardless of any consideration that goes beyond the immediate circumstances. Non-emergency medical cases of legal residents are governed by the Cooperative Health Insurance Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/10 of 1/5/1420 A.H. (13/8/1999), which seeks to provide and regulate health care for all residents in the Kingdom. Compliance by foreign residents with the Residency Law and Labour Law enable the concerned agencies to provide and protect such residents' rights, including the right to health.

Article 13

127. The Kingdom continues to attach the utmost importance to social security. It seeks to provide social welfare services to eligible families and individuals, particularly orphans, the elderly and families that otherwise lack support. During the period covered by the present report, allocations for social security services have been increased steadily, primarily to boost the social security entitlements of both sexes. Women are beneficiaries of social security services under the welfare entitlement rules, whether concerning monthly pension services, annual assistance, in-kind programmes or support programmes. National efforts in this regard have also focused on qualifying women to work and on supporting self-production.

128. Regarding the right to housing, the State continues to expand citizens' options for obtaining quality housing on soft terms within their income limits. The regulations governing the housing subsidy entitle every male or female who is responsible for a family to apply to obtain one of the housing subsidy products available according to the rules and the priority points assigned to each application. The housing subsidy is granted taking into account the number of family members and the economic, social and health status of the applicant and his family members. The Ministry of Housing receives housing subsidy applications through its electronic portal on the Internet. The ministry is currently working to complete procedures for the allocation of subsidies to male and female beneficiaries according to priority points assigned to each application. Women, whether in their capacity as family members or sole providers, will be beneficiaries of the housing subsidy programmes on a par with men. The regulations assign higher priority points to a woman who is a sole provider than to a man who is a sole provider to help her obtain an appropriate housing subsidy product for her family.

129. Women's participation in economic life has increased steadily, parallel with the advances made by women regarding their rights to education, employment and health and with the increase in financing services provided to women by the public and private sector. The percentage of women participating in commercial activities and women's share of the registered capital of all commercial entities have increased, with Saudi women now owning 267,446 enterprises.

130. The Social Development Bank, through its 26 branches, funds women's enterprises on a par with men's enterprises. Women own 19.2 per cent of enterprises. Loans for women's enterprises account for 21 per cent of total loans.

Women hold 14 per cent of the positions in enterprises and have been granted 236 training opportunities. The percentage of bank loans granted to women has increased to 15 per cent of total rank loans in 2014 compared to 9.1 per cent in 2008 (see Annex No. 5).

131. Regarding the right of women to participate in recreational activities and sports, in addition to what is mentioned in this regard in the combined initial and second periodic reports of Saudi Arabia, a committee has been formed to study the situation of women's sports in the Kingdom. Athletic centres and clubs have been established in different regions of the Kingdom. Women are able to engage in sports and recreational activities. Some schools and universities offer courses in which young women engage in sports and physical activities.

Article 14 and paragraphs 37 and 38 of the concluding comments

132. The principle of equality in respect of rights and duties underlies governance in the Kingdom. The Basic Law of Governance, article 8, states, "Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, shura (consultation), and equality in accordance with the Islamic Sharia". Accordingly, the Kingdom has pursued balanced, inclusive development policies to provide equal rights for all. The Kingdom attaches major importance to the principle of social justice and acts to combat social exclusion. As a result, the level of government services provided to residents of the governorates, villages and agricultural settlements has increased steadily. Although such residents enjoy basic rights to education, employment, health, an adequate standard of living and other such rights, there are challenges posed by the expansiveness of the geographical area of the Kingdom and the need to boost awareness of human rights, including the rights of women and others. These challenges are taken into account in the preparation of development plans and programmes and policies for strengthening human rights.

133. Women hold 20 per cent of the seats in the Consultative Council, which is responsible for studying laws, discussing general economic and social development plans and discussing the annual reports submitted by the ministries and other government agencies. The participation of women in the Consultative Council reflects positively on the status of women in general. Women in rural areas also participate in non-governmental organizations and foundations concerned with the rights of women, including rural women. The social development centres and their committees located throughout the Kingdom play a prominent role in local community development through their efforts to ensure the participation of the population — both men and women — in development planning for their regions and in decision-making. The social development centres also implement many programmes and activities in various economic areas to increase economic opportunities for men and women alike and to provide various vocational training opportunities for them.

134. Regarding social security, in addition to what is stated above concerning article 13 of the Convention, the Kingdom has sought to adopt measures to improve access for persons entitled to social security in distant and remote cities and regions through the following:

- Automated search: This is an electronic service involving automated searches of government databases for persons entitled to social security and verification

of their economic, health and family conditions, which may change at any time under a host of circumstances. The financial and living conditions of citizens are ascertained and data thereon are updated monthly to add eligible persons to the list of monthly financial subventions and delete others if their circumstances improve.

- Field research convoy: This service seeks out entitled persons in remote villages. The convoy provides all services of the social security offices. It studies all cases, issues decisions over a two-week work period and issues financial disbursement cards to beneficiaries of both sexes in their places of residence. The convoy also undertakes educational and awareness raising efforts through the services provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development.

135. Regarding education and training, in addition to what is mentioned above in the response concerning article 10 of the Convention, the period of 2008-2014 saw the number of public schools in the regions of the Kingdom increase significantly to 35,488 schools, including 18,744 girls' schools (52 per cent of the total). Higher education institutions also increased in the same period to 39 institutions. Universities and colleges have been established in the governorates and villages therein, boosting the enrolment of women in higher education institutions. Many programmes have been implemented to improve education in the villages and agricultural settlements, including continuing education programmes, mobile educational convoys and vocational programmes. There are 36 colleges subordinate to the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation and 18 colleges of excellence. There are 18 technical colleges for young women compared to four in 2006. In 2016, 15,319 females graduated from the technical colleges. The Technical and Vocational Training Corporation spreads awareness in society of the importance of working in vocational and technical fields, provides a suitable training environment and offers jobs suited to young people of both sexes.

136. The Uncultivated Land Distribution Law is intended to grant individuals of both sexes land, which they develop, reclaim and exploit for agricultural and livestock production. Under article 2 of the law, land suitable for this purpose must be at least five hectors and not exceed 10 hectares for individuals and 400 hectare for companies. Article 9 of the law regulates the outcome of the distribution, which is the recipient's acquisition of the land after reclaiming and exploiting it.

137. The Agricultural Development Fund is a government development institution specialized in financing different areas of agricultural activity throughout Saudi Arabia to facilitate the development of the agricultural sector and increase its productivity using the best scientific methods and current technologies. The fund provides interest-free soft loans to farmers of both sexes for use in procuring agricultural machinery, pumps and equipment for raising cattle, poultry and sheep, beekeeping, fish farming, etc.

138. Electricity has been connected to dwellings in remote areas. Cabinet Decision No. 115 of 7/5/1424 A.H. (7/7/2003) provides for the connection of electricity to homes whose occupants lack documentation of their ownership of the homes. This decision permits many residents of villages and remote areas to remain settled in those areas and to receive basic services. Supplementary Cabinet Decision No. 394 of 15/10/1435 (11/8/2014) was issued to extend these efforts. As of 2013, there were

12,644 cities, villages and agricultural settlements. This number has increased at an annual rate of 1.56 per cent.

Part Four (arts. 15-16)

Article 15

139. The Constitution, Basic Law of Governance and laws emanating therefrom affirm gender equality as explained above in the response concerning article 1 of the Convention. Many legal provisions prohibit the violation of women's rights and unfair treatment of women and require the protection of women's rights and respect for their status as the partners of men in achieving human and national progress, populating the land and promoting civilization. The Basic Law of Governance and other laws contain nothing that can be considered discrimination against women before the law or unfair discrimination between men and women.

140. The legal capacity of women and their rights to conclude contracts and to acquire and administer property are guaranteed by the Islamic Sharia and laws in effect in the Kingdom. The Basic Law of Governance, article 18, states "The State shall guarantee the freedom and inviolability of private property ownership. Property may be seized only in the public interest, provided the owner is fairly compensated". An adult woman has full financial independence and liability. She may dispose of movable and immovable property, administer her financial affairs, engage in all commercial and economic activities, conclude sale and purchase contacts, lease, mortgage, bequeath and gift directly. She is free to obtain government financing for commercial enterprises, open accounts with banks, obtain financing and establish and manage companies of all types. She is entitled to participate in the membership of the Chamber of Commerce councils and committees throughout Saudi Arabia. The Execution Law contains provisions to ensure the stability of rights and transactions between individuals, and men and women are equal in respect of such rights and transactions and the duties pertaining thereto.

141. The Code of Law Practice, article 3 (a), promulgated by Royal Decree M/38 of 28/7/1422 A.H. (16/1/2001), permits persons who practice law to register in the Schedule of Practicing Attorneys. Registrants must be Saudi nationals. Non-Saudis may practice law under agreements between Saudi Arabia and other states. Ninety-seven Saudi women have accordingly been granted licenses to practice law. The requirements for obtaining a license are the same for both men and women. The Administrative Court employs women as Sharia law and legal researchers.

142. The Law of Procedure before the Sharia Courts is based on the principle of gender equality in various judicial proceedings and the full legal capacity of women. The aforesaid law strengthens a woman's rights in litigation. It includes a number of provisions designed to make it easy for women to exercise their right to litigate. Article 39 of the law entitles a woman to bring legal actions against her husband or ex-husband who is located abroad, regardless of whether the marriage contract remains valid or has been terminated by a divorce, etc. A woman may also bring a legal action against her husband or ex-husband to claim maintenance or to prove his paternity or guardianship of a child. Article 39 also allows a non-Saudi woman to bring an action against her husband or ex-husband whose location abroad

is unknown. The Ministry of Justice has issued many instructions requiring agencies to register women and not impose any restrictions in this regard.

143. In addition to the preceding, the Kingdom reaffirms that any contract that limits the capacity of a woman as established under the Islamic Sharia and the laws of the Kingdom is null and void and has no legal effect. The Kingdom has also established the rights of its citizens to enjoy freedom of movement equally with others. Accordingly citizens and residents of Saudi Arabia are guaranteed the right of freedom of movement in Saudi Arabia and abroad and to choose their place of residence under the laws of the Kingdom. The Basic Law of Governance, article 36, states, "A person's actions may not be restricted, nor may he be detained or imprisoned, except under the provisions of the Law".

Article 16 and paragraphs 35 and 36 of the concluding comments

144. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reaffirms its response concerning article 16 in its previous report. It further reaffirms that the Islamic Sharia, which optimally regulates relations within the family, is the primary authority in personal status matters. The Sharia seeks a marital relationship that is characterized by affection and compassion and does not involve any discrimination against the woman that would dishearten her or frustrate her enjoyment of her rights. A woman is entitled to choose her husband. A marriage may be contracted only with the woman's freely given and full consent. She has the same rights as the man in the marriage. Both have duties in addition to the rights and duties imposed by the nature of respective genders, e.g., maintenance, which is the husband's duty and the woman's right.

145. During the period covered by the present report, measures have been taken to strengthen women's enjoyment of their rights in this regard. Many personal status courts have been established throughout the regions and governorates of the Kingdom to decide personal status matters pursuant to the Law of the Judiciary. The Execution Law has also been promulgated. Chapter 4, section 2 of that law contains provisions on execution in personal status matters, particularly cases involving custody, maintenance, visits and marital issues. In addition, the implementing regulation for the Execution Law has been issued under Ministerial Decision No. 9892 of 17/4/1434 A.H. (27/2/2013).

146. A key provision of the Execution Law concerns the immediate execution of decisions and judgments issued in personal status matters. If a matter requires the imposition of a penalty to expedite execution, certain actions are taken, including the suspension of government services or financial services and the attachment or sale of property. If execution requires periodic maintenance payments, such maintenance is given priority over other debts. Personal status judgments issued concerning the custody and protection of a minor, the separation of a husband and wife and the like are executed compulsorily, even if compulsory execution requires the use of authorized force (the police) and the entry of homes. Execution of judgments is repeated whenever necessary. The law also imposes penalties, including imprisonment, in cases of refusal to execute a judgment or opposition to or obstruction of the execution of a judgment issued by an execution judge.

147. Regulatory measures have also been adapted regarding personal status matters, including:

- Royal Order No. A/20 of 7/2/1436 A.H. (29/11/2014) forming a Sharia committee to prepare a draft Code of Judicial Judgments.
- Cabinet Decision No. 65 of 13/2/1435 A.H., which approves a Unified Law on Family Courts in the countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf to serve as a guideline for a period of four years.
- Minister of Justice Decision No. 991/5 of 18/11/1434 A.H. (24/9/2013), which provides for the creation of social services offices in all Saudi courts to provide social assistance and counselling to individuals or families, particularly in marital disputes, and to intervene in cases of violence, the prevention of a woman from marrying and other social problems.

148. The relevant authorities are currently studying the establishment of the minimum age for the marriage of girls and boys. Article 16 (3) of the implementing regulation of the Child Protection Law states, "Before concluding a marriage contract, it is necessary to ascertain that the marriage of a person under the age of 18 does not harm the person and will achieve the best interest of the person, whether the person is a male or female". The Kingdom reaffirms that the provisions of the Islamic Sharia concerning personal status place men and women on an equal par based on complementarity, or de facto equality as it is called by the Committee in its General Comment No. 225, which takes into account biological differences between men and women. Also, the Islamic Sharia permits polygamy according to specific rules, which address certain social problems, such as widowhood, spinsterhood, etc. Under the Islamic Sharia, fairness is a basic requirement that must be met in order to permit multiple wives.

149. Regarding inheritance, the Islamic Sharia guarantees the right of a man and woman to inherit. It sets out rules regulating matters of inheritance, the entitlement of each heir based on the heir's status and degree of kinship to the testator and the duties of the heir to the family. In certain cases, a man may inherit more than a woman. In other cases, a woman may inherit more than a man. In in some cases, the share of the man is equal to the share of the woman. In other cases, a woman inherits and her brother does not inherit, i.e., she blocks him from inheriting. If a man inherits more than a woman, the man is required to provide maintenance for the woman, whereas a woman is not required to provide maintenance to a man if she inherits more than the man. Judicial practice requires that a woman be present in estate division cases to verify that she obtains all her rights.

Paragraphs 17, 18, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42 and 43 of the concluding comments

150. Regarding the Committee's recommendation that a national action plan on gender equality should be developed, a national strategy is currently being prepared to strengthen and protect human rights pursuant to Royal Order No. 13084 of 10/3/1436 A.H.[20] (1/1/2015). The strategy is being prepared based on the principles of the Islamic Sharia, the Basic Law of Governance and other relevant laws and regional and international human rights treaties to which Saudi Arabia has become a party. Preparation of the strategy is also being guided by several declarations and action platforms.

[20] The same order provides for the establishment of a standing committee to prepare the reports mentioned in the introduction of the present report.

151. Regarding statistical information, the present report contains information supported by statistical data on matters covered by the Convention. Saudi Arabia, through the report preparation committee mentioned at the beginning of the report, and in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the framework of the memorandum of understanding concluded with it, is preparing databases that contain detailed, precise statistics.

152. The Kingdom accepts the amendment of article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

153. The objectives of the Optional Protocol to the Convention have in fact been achieved in the Kingdom. There are many effective mechanisms for seeking remedies that ensure fair treatment for women and redress for damage based on complete justice. Accession to the Protocol is being studied in the framework of a review of human rights laws and international instruments.

154. Regarding collaboration with civil society organizations, the present report affirms such collaboration. In addition, the promulgation of the Law on Associations and Foundations further strengthens the effectiveness of civil society. The Kingdom regards private associations and foundations as a primary partner in strengthening and protecting human rights. Accordingly, one of the objectives of the Tenth Development Plan, 2015-2019, is to increase the contribution of civil society organizations to efforts to develop women's participation in development, as mentioned in the present report. In addition, the Ministry of Justice has concluded memorandums of understanding with civil society organizations concerned with human rights in respect of personal status matters. The present report covers the dimensions of the partnership between government entities and civil society organizations.

155. Regarding accession to international human rights instruments, the Kingdom periodically studies accession to human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. In 2008, the Kingdom acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto.

Conclusion

156. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia affirms that the measures reviewed in the present report represent the key measures and efforts which it has adopted to guarantee the rights of women. Despite what has been achieved, Saudi Arabia continues to aspire to further strengthen and protect women's rights by legislating essential laws, adopting effective executive measures and preparing programmes and plans based on the provisions of the Convention to which the Kingdom has committed, taking into account the Committee's comments and its specific and general recommendations.

Annexes

Annex No. 1: Specialized courses held in the framework of the memorandum of understanding concluded with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Course title	*Date held*	*Target groups*
The successful experiences of states in combating trafficking in persons	March 2014	Government employees
The work of international human rights protection machineries	March 2014	Government employees, lawyers and representatives of civil society organizations
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	March 2014	Government employees and the government committee concerned with the preparation of the present report
Training of human rights trainers (1)	December 2014	Government employees and representatives of civil society organizations
Training of human rights trainers (2)	February 2015	Government employees and representatives of civil society organizations
Mechanisms and methods for documenting and monitoring human rights conditions	June 2015	Researchers of the Human Rights Commission
The role of civil society in observing and documenting human rights cases in Saudi Arabia	August 2015	Civil society organizations
Training workshop for preparing periodic reports concerning the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	September 2015	Members of the Standing Committee for the Preparation of Reports
Report on the introductory symposium on the Convention on the Rights of the Child	October 2015	Government employees, representatives of civil society organizations and students
Toward a national vision for teaching human rights in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	December 2015	Government employees

Annex No. 2: Key awareness-raising programmes launched by the Human Rights Commission during the period covered by the present report

Programme	*Type of programme*	*Date*	*Target groups*
Human rights: between expectations and reality	Workshop	2011	Employees of government departments
Human rights: between the Sharia and the law	Symposium	2011	General
The judiciary and international human rights standards	Discussion group	2011	Judges, public prosecutors and lawyers
The judiciary and human rights principles	Training course	2011	Judges, public prosecutors and lawyers
Human rights and security governance	Training course	2011	Security personnel
Protection of the woman's right	Symposium	2012	Students of the Technical College for Girls in Riyadh
Explanation of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Offences Law	Symposium	2012	Public prosecutors and law officers
Women's issues in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Workshop	2013	General
Protection from abuse	Symposium	2014	General
Forum on domestic violence from a human rights perspective	Symposium	2014	General
Domestic violence and the method for dealing with the	Training course	2014	General
Domestic violence[21]	Lecture	2014	General

[21] A number lectures entitled "Domestic violence" were given in the girls' schools in different regions of the Kingdom.

Annex No. 3: Number of male and female students in public education during 2008-2015

Year	*Male students*	*Female students*	*Total*
2014-2015	3 659 122	3 625 207	7 284 329
2013-2014	3 596 995	3 201 447	6 798 442
2012-2013	3 475 414	3 207 316	6 682 730
2011-2012	3 318 102	3 174 249	6 492 351
2010-2011	3 285 965	3 102 573	6 388 538
2009-2010	3 272 737	3 084 767	6 357 504
2008-2009	3 188 285	2 973 409	6 161 694

Annex No. 4: Female beneficiaries of programmes launched by the Ministry of Education to combat illiteracy

Year	*Number female beneficiaries*
2004	1 531
2005	5 936
2006	5 893
2007	2 094
2008	5 397
2009	9 282
2013	3 547
2014	1 597
2015	2 004
Total	**37 821**

Annex No. 5: Number of women registered in the Commercial Register during 2008-2014

Sector	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*Total*
Agriculture, fishing and forests	99	157	200	160	305	330	224	1 475
Petroleum, mines and coal	13	21	15	21	52	111	77	310
Industry	81	58	92	116	139	137	100	723
Electricity generation and water extraction	492	733	865	1 315	2 333	2 935	2 134	10 807
Building and construction contracts	322	945	1 042	2 429	6 514	8 473	6 393	26 118
Wholesale and retail commerce	1 291	1 287	1 515	2 091	2 958	4 750	3 103	17 001
Financial and business services	0	1	1	1	2	1	4	10
Transportation, storage and refrigeration	122	190	240	427	631	864	575	3 049
Social and personal services	254	494	658	797	1 180	1 792	1 385	6 560
Miscellaneous services	613	750	970	3 046	6 094	10 407	6 204	28 084
Total	**3 293**	**4 636**	**5 598**	**10 403**	**20 208**	**29 800**	**20 199**	**94 137**